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HURSTWOOD.

VOL. II.

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A

TALE OF THE YEAR 1715.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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HURSTWOOD:

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TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARA…

CHAPTER I.

DE RUSE retired to his room very early in the evening. Rachel, who knew his purpose, could scarcely refrain her emotion. As he closed the door, however, he cast upon her a look so full of love, and hope, and encouragement, that, though she knew not why, a ray of consolation infused itself into her heart, and enabled her, during the remainder of the evening, to appear sufficiently composed, to avoid all suspicion of her being acquainted previously with what was in agitation.

As soon as De Ruse reached his apartment, he wrote a letter to his friend Robert, full of gratitude and acknowledgments for the many favours conferred upon him, and apologized for the suddenness of his departure, by assuring him, "that he had already found himself unable to resist his kind entreaties to prolong his residence at Kilbank, and was therefore afraid again to trust his resolution. He hoped, however, if he did not speedily return, at least he should be able to transmit a favourable account of his motions, and that as soon as any thing was decided upon relative to his proceedings, he would give him immediate notice."

After providing himself with sucn arms as were most convenient for the purpose of his expedition, and grasping in his hand a staff of stubborn black-thorn, by which he might be assisted in ascending and descending the more rugged

parts of the mountains, he made his egress by a private door that led towards the woods, and taking a path that followed the windings of the rivulet, he soon found himself on the banks of the river, considerably further up than the bridge at Hurstwood.

Here he paused to consider which would be his better plan, to make for the bridge, or risk the ferry over which he had before passed previous to his meeting with Robert Kirkbye. Aware that, with so vigilant and active an enemy as young Pennington, there might be danger in both, he rejected both these alternatives; and as the river where he stood appeared, by its riplings and breadth of surface, to be less rapid and deep than in other parts, he resolved to take off part of his dress and attempt to ford it.

The night was clear, but many a cold and violent gust moaned amid the dark foliage of the neighbouring woods, and

mingled with the distant roar of the waters as they forced their way through the narrow passes of the rocks. The heaven was full of stars, and a pale new moon "beheld her silver visage in the watery glass." De Ruse, however, as he contemplated the wildness of the evening, and thought how inconvenient, if not hazardous, his attempt to ford the river might prove under such circumstances, resolved first to reconnoitre the ferry, which was at no great distance above him, and try what chance he might have of passing there without notice or molestation.

To his great delight, on reaching the ferry, he found a boat moored close under the bank, and the chain which held it being merely hooked upon a ring, he at once disengaged it, and was about to push into the middle of the stream.

The sound of voices, however, on the other side, caused him to change his first intention, and instead of making to the

ferry-house he kept within the shade of the high bank, and did not attempt to cross or make the least noise till he had got such a distance as to preclude all possibility of a discovery. A dark cloud, which at this critical moment cast an additional gloom upon every surrounding object, aided his purpose, and he soon found himself safely landed on the opposite shore.

Trusting in his well-tried activity, De Ruse determined, ere he proceeded, to discover the intent of the voices he had heard, and to certify himself how far his suspicions of young Pennington were founded in fact. Still keeping the shade, sometimes crawling upon his hands and knees, and sometimes lying flat among the copsewood to listen, he at length gained the summit of a steep bank, and after a few moment's pause, fearing the noise he had made in pushing his way through the bushes might excite attention, he ventured to look down upon

the little pier which fronted the ferry-house. At first he saw nothing; but on a closer inspection he perceived two men wrapped in great coats, pacing a patch of ground below him, which was concealed from the view of those passing the ford by a thick screen of willows mixed with other underwood. Convinced that these men were placed there to seize him, and that some desperate plan for his capture was on foot, he was about to start up and make good his retreat, when standing suddenly still as if to listen, one of the men thus addressed his companion in an under tone.

"If I did not hear a plash and the chain rattle, Reuben, may I forfeit my head! Mr. Julius said he was as strong as a lion and as cunning as a fox, and I'll lay my life upon it he has given us the slip. Mark my words, if he has not."

"How should he know we were here to take him?" grumbled Reuben, pur-

suing his walk with the quick step of a sentinel on a frosty night. "Depend upon it," continued he, "the young man would never come this way. He would take the bridge at Hurstwood."

"It may be so," muttered his companion; "but I heard a noise on the other side, notwithstanding, and I do not know what could be playing with the chain and plashing the oar at this time o' night. However, as you say he would not come this way, it's folly for me to be starving here. I'll just go into old Peter's and warm a pot of ale, while you are on the look-out. Two eyes will be as well as four, and you can call me if there be occasion."

Reuben, in whom De Ruse recognized his former host on the shore, returned no answer, and the other entering the cottage, all was again silent.

It must be now getting late, and De Ruse hastened forwards to the place of appointment, happy in having escaped

these double toils which were so unaccountably laid to entrap him. But why did Julius Pennington imagine he would be out on this very night? Either he must have been informed of his intention of meeting Godfrey, or meditated an attack at Kilbank itself, and determined thus to anticipate the possibility of a retreat.

Perhaps Godfrey himself was treacherous, and had been paid for thus betraying him, under the semblance of an interview at the bridge of Barle. That, however, would soon be seen. If it were so, he would not abide by the appointment.

De Ruse proceeded with rapidity and at the same time with caution. He avoided the path, and keeping on the high grounds soon found himself descending the very hill whose lofty groves had previously afforded him shelter after his short but dangerous interview with Rachel. As by the imperfect glimmer

of a young moon, the bridge with its dark arch and broken battlement was seen at the gloomy entrance of the pass beyond, all the circumstances of that interview burst full upon his recollection, and he could not but admire that unaccountable and strange train of incident, which might in all probability give the colouring to his future prospects. "I came hither," ejaculated he, as for a moment he paused in his descent, "an exile, a proscribed rebel, friendless and persecuted;—if I escape the toils by which I am beset—who knows how different may be my prospects?—If I carry away the heart of Rachel, England could not grant me more!" Elated with his own thoughts, buoyed up by hope, "the miserable have no other medicine," he soon gained the banks of the stream, and when arrived within a stone's cast from the bridge, he stopped and listened.

No sound of human voice or tread reached his ears. The deep murmurs of

the eddying flood, the gentle sighing of the passing gale, alone broke in upon the universal stillness. The place on which he now stood was closed in by abrupt and savage hills, from whose summits, so near did they approach, the wandering shepherds not unfrequently hailed each other. The bed of the stream, widened beyond its necessary limits by the frequent rush of the mountain torrents, nearly occupied the coombe or level of the vale, leaving but a scanty allowance for a few patches of meadow and pasture, and the two bridle roads that skirted each bank. Never was there a fitter place for a deed of darkness. The world seemed all excluded, and even coward conscience itself could scarce have trembled here for fear of observation or interruption.

Uncertain how to proceed, yet fully aware that caution was the only weapon to secure him against any meditated treachery, De Ruse, stealing through the dark shadow of a beetling rock which

overhung the path, ere it threaded the windings of the pass, planted himself behind a stunted thorn, from whence, unobserved, he might reconnoitre the place of meeting, and thus reserve to himself the possibility of a retreat, if appearances wore a different aspect from what he had been led to imagine.

For some time nothing disturbed the wildness and desolation of the scene, and De Ruse began to renew his suspicions that Godfrey had only tempted him forth to render him a more secure victim to the treacherous and deadly designs of his enemies. Accordingly, he was on the point of retreating from a place where he would naturally be sought for, as soon as his escape from the parties at the fords was discovered, when he perceived a human figure occupy the centre of the bridge for a moment, and then disappear.

This must be Godfrey,—he was true to his word,—no time must therefore be

lost. De Ruse rushed forward, and encountered the figure just as it was entering the hovel. " Godfrey ?" exclaimed he, holding a little back. The man started,—turned round,—and beckoning him to follow, rapidly led the way over the bridge, and stopped not till they had gained the other side of the defile, where the hills opening, gradually declined towards the sea shore.

" Now we are safe !" exclaimed he to De Ruse, as they paused a moment for breath. " But why did not you come sooner ? I waited a full hour.—Yet how could I expect it ?" resumed he, recollecting himself. " How did you escape at the fords ? I had given you up for lost."

De Ruse threw his penetrating eyes at this moment upon the speaker. He would have read his very soul. His confidence however returned as he recognized, through the indistinct light, the pale and melancholy countenance,

the spare and meagre form of his former associate.

"Tell me, Godfrey," exclaimed he firmly, "tell me before I stir one step further,—are your designs honourable? If they are, why did you suffer me to remain ignorant of the snares which were intended to intercept my way hither?" "I thank heaven that you are yet free!" answered Godfrey, much agitated. "We have no time now for explanations. I was not aware of your danger till it was out of my power to prevent it. If you knew all, you would not doubt my fidelity. But let us hasten forwards. I think I hear the tread of horses."

The young man darted down the slope, and leaving the track, made his way through the furze and heath in a straight direction to the cottage on the shore. De Ruse followed with equal rapidity, but suddenly stopped his friend ere they reached the place. "Where are you taking me, Godfrey?" exclaimed he.— "You are not perhaps aware that your

father is in young Pennington's pay, and is even active in the business of taking me. You would not have me enter the lion's den? It would be madness — arrant folly. I shall not stir a step further."

"As you regard your life," said the young man earnestly, "do not hesitate a moment. I hear them descending the hill."

"Who — who?" eagerly demanded De Ruse, more and more surprized. — "I will not stir one step till you tell me who they are, and why I am brought hither."

"Only trust yourself to me; — follow my directions, and you shall see and hear all," answered Godfrey impatiently. — "Don't you hear them coming? They are just at the turn of the road; — follow me immediately, or you are a dead man. Why — why should I deceive you?"

De Ruse heard the sound of horses hoofs as they clambered the rocky side of

the abrupt knoll which overlooked from the land the curiously formed hovel of his ci-devant protector. He found that a moment only in all probability intervened between him and destruction. Why should that person deceive him who had experienced at his hands nothing but a succession of the kindest and most friendly offices? He had not time to think upon the world and all its "slippery turns." He firmly grasped his weapon, and sliding down the steep bank, sheltered by a few scattered bushes that threw around a broad shade, he soon stood with his companion on a ledge of rock which over-hung, and was partly connected with the rude roof of the cottage. Such was the fantastic form of this solitary dwelling, that a low door from above admitted our adventurers into an apartment which, being open to the roof, and in a great degree unconnected with the other rooms, had been previously allotted as the joint dormitory

of De Ruse and Godfrey. From this place to the rooms below there was no connection whatever, it having been intended merely for the reception of faggots and such other lumber as required shelter from the violent storms to which that coast was subject. Aware that De Ruse would here know perfectly well how to conduct himself, Godfrey left him immediately; first, however, directing his attention to an aperture through which the light glared strongly from below.

"I wonder how this adventure will end," thought De Ruse: "this Godfrey is not the man they think him. I hope all may be well, yet the whole affair is passing strange." He carefully laid himself at full length on the floor, and applying his face to the aperture, found that he could command an uninterrupted view of all that passed below, without much fear of discovery.

The entrance of Godfrey, and a mute but expressive salutation which

passed between him and his mother, who was preparing a meal against her husband's return, first drew the attention of De Ruse, and caused him to scrutinize the countenances of both with more than common attention. He saw nothing however that gave him the least cause for apprehension. Godfrey appeared calm and deliberate, though the occasional quick glances of his dark eye showed that he was quite on the alert, and fully equal to conduct what he had undertaken. On the countenance of the mother shone beams of real benevolence and good-will to her fellow-creatures. No disguise or sinister purpose deformed the openness of her brow, or infused itself into her aspect; and though the blight of affliction might be traced on her furrowed cheek, yet through all an affectionate warmth of feeling was perceptible, which might perhaps have been the fatal cause of all her sorrows. For the first time did De Ruse remark the

fine proportions of her shapely figure as they were half revealed by the short gown or kirtle, which, loosely fastened with a girdle, was the usual dress of persons of her humble condition; and his observations caused his former surprize to cease, that a wary character like Mr. Pennington should involve himself in an affair with one of so mean a station.

Our hero's meditations were speedily interrupted by the arrival of two persons whom he naturally concluded to be the same whom he had so narrowly escaped falling in with. His surprize, however, was great when the foremost, throwing off a rough cloak, and uncovering his head, shewed the countenance of the very person whom he had rescued at the ford near Hurstwood. It was Julius Pennington!

De Ruse almost shrunk to find himself, as it were, in the very presence of his bitterest foe; but reflecting that his situation allowed him instant means of se-

curing his retreat, even though his presence was discovered, he determined to maintain his post, and observe narrowly what was going on.

The other horseman was now likewise uncovered, but by his dress he appeared to be a kind of under-gamekeeper, or forester, of whom many were kept to preserve inviolate the precincts of Hurstwood chase. He was stout-built, with a face bronzed by exposure to the weather, and wore a listless air, which plainly intimated that he was ready to follow where bounty led.

"Good woman," said Julius, as he seated himself uninvited on the blazing hearth, "send the lad out to look after our horses;—and do you hear, sir," continued he, addressing Godfrey, "keep a sharp look out for your father, and if you let us know when he is coming, I'll cross your hand with a fair silver piece for your further encouragement. Make haste, my lad—your father cannot be

long, and I am not much in a humour for waiting."

But in spite of this encouragement, and this implied necessity for haste, Godfrey both turned a deaf ear and a dumb tongue to the command, and carelessly retained his seat in the corner, steadily gazing into the fire. Julius was about to upbraid his obstinacy in rude and sharp terms, when the mistress of the house turning round hastily, said in a voice somewhat tremulous—

"For shame, young gentleman! why should you curse at those that cannot speak, and send out a poor unlucky stripling like this to tent your gear, when you have such a stout, well-fed fellow at your heels as this Beechly. It is for the like of him, and not my poor lad there, to tent your horses and bide the sharp winds on a March night."

Julius seemed convinced, and motioning to Beechly, the fellow put on his hat and walked sulkily out. De Ruse

observed from his elevated station that young Pennington appeared thoughtful and uneasy. He frequently looked at his watch, rose from his seat, and paced the earthen pavement of the humble apartment into which his sinister projects had introduced him.

At length the entrance of Beechly prognosticated something new. "Is Reuben arrived?" enquired Julius hastily. "Who has he got with him? Good news, I hope?"

"Bad enough," answered the forester. "A blemish—as fair a blemish as ever I knew! No need to blow a mort this time. They drew the cover true enough; but the game was too sly for us. He took soil, and the devil may catch him now, if he can."

"Impossible! There is something further in this," exclaimed Julius in a passion. "They must have been at their foollery, and attending to any thing but

their duty. The fellow would never have taken the cold water on a dark night, if there had not been some hubbub to scare him. It is all vastly fine; but you may whistle for your pay, and the next time I want assistance, I shall apply elsewhere for it. Where is Reuben?"

"Here, sir," answered the shepherd himself, who was just entering. "We have made a lame business of it, but it was none of our faults I can swear. Never did an old fox watch his game better than we tented the ford, but it was all to no purpose, as Beechly has told you."

"Then the rebel has really escaped!" exclaimed Julius, in a tone of undissembled mortification. "All this trouble and all this contriving to end in disappointment! Have you any idea, Reuben, which way he took? That he was at Kilbank when the officers called with their warrant, I know by certain proof; and that he is not far from Kilbank at

this moment, is what I am equally convinced of. The whole business is most unfortunate!"

"It is not so very different from what I expected," said Reuben, listlessly scratching his curly head, and elevating his eye-brows, as if he had no mean opinion of his own discernment: "I never saw a more likely young fellow to give us the slip that I know of. As bold as a buck, and as swift as a roe, Beechly; and if I was bound to shew him my face, I had rather it should be in good company than by myself."

Julius, without answering this encomium, sat for some time deeply musing. At length he spoke:

"This fellow, Beechly, cannot be far off. Do not therefore lose a moment. Go round to all the men, and set them forthwith on the watch. Let them guard narrowly every pass that leads to the coast, and that man who either takes him alive or dead (if the latter the bet-

ter), may consider his fortune as made. I would rather sacrifice a thousand pounds than he should leave the country. Take fire-arms with you, and if he resists —".

"Which he is sure to do," interrupted Reuben —

"Then shoot him through the head for a rebel and a vagabond, and upon me and mine be his blood. Go, Beechly, and do not loose one moment. I will back to St. Marions, and put all on the alert there."

De Ruse, ignorant of the very weighty reasons by which his antagonist was urged on, marvelled greatly at the determined and sanguinary nature of his measures, and several times felt a great inclination to burst from his retreat, and demand an explanation and full satisfaction for a persecution at once so unreasonable and inveterate. The dangerous consequences, however, of such a measure, whatever might be its present success, deterred

him from the attempt, and stifling his feelings of indignation as well as he could, he silently awaited the issue of this extraordinary conference.

Beechly had not been gone long, ere Julius informed Reuben that he had some private business for his ear, and at the same time pointed towards Godfrey, who had hitherto remained firm in his station, and appeared scarcely to notice what was going on.

"O, if you mean the lad," said Reuben, "there is no fear of him. He is as dumb as a bell without clapper, and a bit daft into the bargain. But if you wish it, he shall march. Come, make slippy, boy, and we shall want neither you nor your mother till you are called for."

Godfrey rose, and as he withdrew, threw his eyes with an anxious but momentary gaze upon the aperture, from whence he rightly conjectured that his friend would be able to gain that informa-

tion which was denied to himself. De Ruse caught the glance, and remained steadily attentive. When the room was cleared, Julius with some hesitation thus began:

"What I have to tell you, Reuben, is of some consequence to you as well as to myself. Your cabin, and the right of pasturage which you enjoy here, are equivalent to a free gift from my father, and as such shall be ever considered by me. Now circumstances have occurred which rather threaten our title to the estate of Hurstwood, and this very young man whom we have been endeavouring to entrap, is the only obstacle to our obtaining eternal possession of it. Fool that he is, he has under these circumstances ventured into the country where his life is likely to be most greedily sought, and being already a condemned traitor, duty to the government, as well as private interest, points out the only course we ought to pursue.—Now hear,

Reuben. I know of no one more active or more trust-worthy than yourself. Set about the cause in good earnest;—go after this young man—entice him here if you can; but if that is impracticable,—there is a shorter way;—you understand me. In the event of your success, I will bind myself to make over to you as your own double the portion of land you now occupy, and a round sum of money to buy stock. And remember, the cause is your's as well as mine; for if this run-away gets possession of the estate, there is no more chance of your living here without rent, than there is of my living at Hurstwood."

"I had always understood that your father bought the estate," replied Reuben; "and if all was fair about it, how comes it that this young man can disturb you?"

"I did not come here to answer questions," replied Julius sharply, "but to point out to you at once your duty and

your interest. What have you to care about flaws in titles? And what time is there to sit here explaining to you a set of law terms, which, after all, you could never understand? All I can say is, that this young man has his neck already in the halter for his rebellion, and if it is your interest to turn him off a day or two sooner than the hangman, I do not see what should hinder you. But do your own way: I did not come to petition a favour, but to let you into a way of making your own fortune."

"Then this young man is a Hurstwood?" calmly enquired the wary peasant, pretending to bury all other considerations in a very natural curiosity.

"No matter who or what he is," answered Julius, peevishly. "Tell me at once, do you undertake the business, or do you not? If not, I know how to look elsewhere."

"Come, Mr. Julius," answered Reuben, with affected scrupulosity, "you

must let a man draw his own breath before he stops that of another. I am not very fond of facing these desperate Jacobites, and it is an awful thing to dip one's fingers in human blood. I will do any thing else for you; but I cannot precisely say as to this exact thing that you mention."

"Very well, Reuben," replied Julius; "I would advise you immediately to begin packing up, for as sure as this young man escapes us, so sure will you be ejected from the Cliff farm. I am not ashamed of doing my duty to my king, by removing one of his enemies from the face of the earth, and therefore I have no doubt of finding many friends to assist me."

Reuben mused. When virtue deliberates, vice is generally triumphant. Julius saw this hesitation with secret joy, and gave it time to work.

"Well, well, if it must be so, it must," at length murmured Reuben. "I can-

not be so very wrong since he is condemned already. But hark ye, Mr. Julius, I will do my best to bring the young man here, and put him in your power; but I do not bargain at present for any thing further. And for this I am to have the Over farm and stock."

"If you succeed, certainly."

"Let me see," said Reuben, calculating; "the Over farm and stock for putting this young rebel out of the way; —the Cliff farm rent-free for marrying your father's doxy, and keeping his bastard. So far very fair. Have you any thing else for me to do?"

"Yes, but not now. A young lady of my acquaintance is rather high and saucy, and I shall want your help—"

"To ruin her, I suppose, as your father has done elsewhere before you?"

"To *marry* her, if you mean that by ruining her," replied Julius, vexed at the familiarity to which his own evil designs had exposed him. "But more of

this in a few days. Let your first business be to reconnoitre the whole country. I have little doubt of your meeting with this Mr. De Ruse somewhere in the neighbourhood. You are already acquainted with him. Get him here by fair means or foul;—let me know immediately, and the business is done."

Reuben promised. He received the glittering earnest of future reward; and having attended his patron to the door, and assisted him to mount, sat down to his evening meal; and having finished, set out himself on his important mission.

CHAP. II.

The departure of young Pennington and his retainer was soon followed by a visit from Godfrey to his friend. He found De Ruse violently agitated. The scene he had witnessed had filled him with sensations of astonishment, horror, and indignation; and it was some time before Godfrey could force him to comprehend, that the coast being now clear, he might with safety descend and refresh exhausted nature, before he left a roof where nothing but danger awaited him.

"But where am I to go?" enquired he anxiously. "Every avenue to escape is already beset. I do not now so much wonder at this Mr. Pennington's desire to put me out of the way; — but if it is within the sphere of human capability, I

will give these blood-hounds the slip.— Yet, how shall I proceed ?"

"Give yourself no trouble about the matter," answered Godfrey. "I did not bring you here without providing means for getting you safely away again. Let us go down, — my mother is expecting us, and I dare say you will not be the worse for a little supper. We can converse better by the fire-side, and there is no danger of our being interrupted, for I watched Reuben over the hill myself.'

De Ruse descended and entered the cottage where so lately his own destruction had been plotted. His kind-hearted hostess received him with unusual cordiality, and the table was soon spread with the rude fare of the mountains. Godfrey after a short meal went out to prepare for their departure, and his mother meanwhile thus opened a portion of his history to her attentive auditor.

"I dare say, Mr. De Ruse, you were

greatly surprised to hear Godfrey talk when he saw you at Justice Kirkbye's? I have heard of wonders, but I think he is the wonder of them all. Ever since that unlucky affair with Mr. Pennington of St. Marion's, I do not mean to speak any ill of him, though I might, this poor lad and myself lived at my brother's on the other side of the water. It is now about five years since he died, and being something in debt, and not knowing what to do, having no friend in the world, I came over to Mr. Pennington and asked him to relieve us from our difficulties, in consideration of past ill-usage. He spoke me very kindly, though he need not have been afraid of my telling any thing, and promised, if I would marry this rascal Reuben, that he would give us a farm on his own estate, and that it should go afterwards to poor Godfrey. I could not resist this offer for the boy's sake; and so it all took place without his knowing a word about it. I went to fetch him, and

when I told him all, I thought he would have broken his heart. He said he had rather have worked with his own hands, or gone to jail, or done any thing, sooner than his mother should have done such a thing; and he was never quiet till he got me to promise that I would say he was dumb, and could not speak a word from the day he was born. And what was it all for? O, Mr. De Ruse! his proud spirit could not bear to live with such a man as I had got for my husband; and he said that he could not trust his tongue, if any of the Penningtons ever came to the house. Well, it was so. He has never spoken a word on this side the water to any body but myself and you; and I often think his heart will break yet, he takes his birth and situation so ill."

"But why does not he leave this country," enquired De Ruse, "and seek a better fortune in some more remote part? He does not want for ability, I am sure."

"No, indeed," replied the mother, exultingly, "he has five times as much as half the clavering fellows that wag their saucy tongues from land's-end to land's-end. But he says he will never leave me while Reuben lives. He cannot bear to have me ill-used by such a brute, without having any body at hand to help and to comfort me. He is a good son, and I trust heaven will reward him at the last."

"I do not doubt it," replied De Ruse, much affected. "I wish it was in my power to assist you both. I hope, however, something may be done, if things only turn out fortunately for me, and I am sure no exertions of mine can ever repay your son and yourself for all your kindness and hospitality."

The good woman wept, and returned no answer. Godfrey soon returned, and informed De Ruse that his preparations were completed. "But first tell me, Godfrey," said he, "what plan have you laid

out for me to pursue? I am not accustomed to go to work blindly, and much as I am inclined to trust to your discretion, yet my motions must be in some degree guided by my own opinion."

"Trust him!" echoed the good woman of the house. "If the young man is not to be trusted, I do not know who is. Why, sir, — if Reuben or young Mr. Pennington were to know what Godfrey is about, it would be as much as his life was worth and mine too. You may trust him, sir; I'll uphold it."

"Indeed, you mistake me," replied De Ruse. "After what has already past, I can have no fear, I only wished to know what we are about."

"As there is no safety in your remaining here," replied Godfrey, "I thought it would be better if you crossed the water. I have a friend there who will treat you well for my sake, and you are more likely to get a passage there free of suspicion than you could be here, how-

ever long you might wait for it. This is my plan."

"It could not be better," answered De Ruse, "but—"

"Then let us immediately push off from shore," said Godfrey, "for every moment of our stay here is dangerous, and I shall have to account for my absence if I do not contrive to get back by the time that Reuben returns. We will talk over objections as we go."

De Ruse *had* something to object; but as the case was urgent, he deferred saying more at present. After bidding farewell to his hostess, he followed in silence to the base of the rocks, and there perceived a small boat, fitted with a sail and a pair of oars, ready for their reception.

The wind blew steadily from the south-west, and the frail bark bounded rapidly over the watery surface. The moon had disappeared, the heavens were now covered with clouds, and the fugitives drew their only light from the faint

dawning which just glimmered on the horizon.

De Ruse sat at the prow of the boat, too much absorbed in his own meditations to enter into any converse with his friend. He, attentive only to make sure the destined point, sat at the stern and guided their way through the melancholy waste of waters. De Ruse was revolving in his mind all the interesting particulars with which he had become so oddly acquainted. His own fate, the fate of Rachel, and the fate of Hurstwood, seemed to be all pending. Murder, violence, and rapine were abroad! — and he, — he who alone could anticipate their effects, was, at so critical a moment, flying from the very scene whither his destinies seemed almost to call him. Yet to return at the present juncture would be certain destruction.

A thousand schemes, a thousand conjectures distracted his fancy. How could *he* stand between Julius Pennington and

the possession of the estate of Hurstwood? Yet that it was so, he had heard from the lips of Julius himself, and his inveterate persecution proved it beyond a doubt. De Ruse too remembered the unusual, and at the time unaccountable excitement of feeling which had agitated him on his first sight of the old mansion and the surrounding country. Could it then be the place of his birth? Could his father have once inhabited it? Was he himself the heir to the honours and domains of the ancient family of Hurstwood? All this was not impossible; and his lively fancy could not refrain from thinking it probable.

His momentary exultation was, however, no little repressed as he considered that even supposing his new-born hopes were true, yet—yet by his late fatal adherence to the cause of rebellion, all expectation was for ever cut off of his enjoying those possessions, which, perhaps, he inherited from his ancestors. Had he

not heard of the blood which had dyed the scaffold, of the numerous forfeitures and attainders which had been so relentlessly issued against his powerful friends and associates, and could he expect, without supporters, obnoxious to the government, and with a disputed title perhaps to crown all, could *he* expect to be more fortunate and sit down unmolested, while others—not perhaps equally guilty—were suffering the extremest penalties which a tyrannical and arbitrary faction could inflict? O no! Delusive would be these expectations,—it would be folly to indulge them.

From his own condition, De Ruse's thoughts next rambled to the allusion which young Pennington had made, relative to his own proposed marriage. "A young lady of my acquaintance rather high"—it must, it could not but allude to Rachel. Foiled in his designs, disappointed in his love, this arbitrary young man was scheming to accomplish

that by violence which he had failed in procuring by artifice. It was then as he had conjectured, and as he had forewarned Miss Kemyss herself! Unprotected, —friendless, —open as she was, by the peculiarities of her situation, to become the defenceless victim of craft, intimidation, or violence, De Ruse shuddered as he contemplated her danger; and he at once resolved, with that generous personal disregard which formed a prominent part of his character, to stand between her and destruction, though instant ruin to himself should be the consequence. It would be necessary to impart his plans to Godfrey, from whose assistance and connivance he hoped much, and therefore, leaving his solitary station, he placed himself at the stern of the boat.

We will not detain our readers by minutely detailing what passed between the young men. Suffice it to say, that Godfrey, ignorant of the strong motives

which impelled his companion to undertake such interference, exclaimed loudly against the plan, and affirmed, that "though he was willing at any time to risk his life against oppression and violence, yet for De Ruse, in his situation, to volunteer any thing of such a nature, was nearly allied to madness." De Ruse, while he smiled at the force of the expression, could not but congratulate himself on the warmth with which it was pronounced;—it convinced him, if indeed he wanted any further arguments to that effect, that Godfrey was actuated in his conduct towards him by none but the purest and most disinterested motives.

But on the point of his interference, De Ruse was not to be so easily reconciled. It was enough for him that he believed Rachel in danger, and he determined at least to give her the advantage of the information which he had so fortunately obtained. He accordingly

questioned Godfrey as to the probability of his being able to convey a note privately to the young lady at Hurstwood, and on the latter's assuring him that there would be no difficulty, he determined upon this as the best and most prudent expedient that, under circumstances, could be adopted. "If I can only succeed in putting her on her guard, she will surely either be able to prevail upon her aunt to take precautionary steps, or at any rate to claim the protection of the Kirkbyes."

So thought De Ruse;—but, had he known the circumstances of Rachel, he would have had reason to form a less satisfactory conclusion.

Their little bark at length completed its voyage, and landed them on a shore equally wild and desolate with that which they had left. Godfrey, who well knew every secret path and intricate winding of the country, in which he had passed the joyous season of childhood, struck

briskly amongst the hills which rose abruptly from the shore, followed closely by his no less active companion.

The invigorating air of morning already begun to diffuse life and freshness around, though it wanted a considerable time to the sun-rising. De Ruse bounded over the turf with the light step of comparative freedom and security, while his companion, assuming a liveliness and gaiety of air to which he had before seemed a total stranger, pointed out in their progress numerous objects, and detailed many circumstances, which proved the strength and interest of his recollections.

"There," said he, pausing for a moment ere they descended into the fertile bottom of a little valley, "there—beneath those lofty elms, did I spend a few short and happy years in the family of my uncle! That house and those fields which you see so beautifully surrounding it, were once ours. My uncle, however, was not careful! and it was the source of

all the evils which have since pressed so heavily upon my poor mother and myself."

A tear started in Godfrey's eye, as he said this. He turned round, and dashed it hastily away.

"If, with such adverse fortunes as mine," continued he, still gazing upon his former home, "heaven had kindly granted me insensibility sufficient to disregard them, I might still have some portion of comfort, if not happiness, in my grasp. But in my case, real evils are exaggerated by fancied wrongs. My mother's imprudence in being first beguiled by greatness, and then suffering herself to be lowered by its influence, has struck such a chill upon my wild, ungovernable heart, that I fear death only will release me from the mortifications which, whether real or imaginary, I yet unceasingly suffer."

De Ruse turned and saw, in the countenance of his companion, a mixture of

deep feeling and indignant pride. He could comprehend it all. As he reflected on Godfrey's situation, he could fully sympathize in the disdain which flashed in his eyes and curled upon his lip.

"My mother was that vile man's innocent victim;" continued Godfrey; "he came under the guise of friendship to my uncle's house;—professed to a poor, artless, country girl, intentions the most honourable, and took advantage of her easy simplicity to accomplish her ruin. I am the offspring of this villany, and upon me are all its bitter consequences entailed. Yet credulity has been my mother's only fault, and I consider the vows by which my father prevailed over her weaker nature, to have been as really binding as if they had been registered amid the whole circle of his friends, and pronounced before the priest in the sight of heaven. I am as much, as truly his son, as the haughty Julius himself, and I conceive myself equally entitled to

present consideration and future provision. The world, I know, judges differently—but the world is not acquainted with circumstances. Forlorn as my present lot is, I am determined never to regulate my actions by any other rule than the feelings I profess. I shall never lower myself by any verbal communication, either with those whose inferiority merits my contempt, or with others who think it proper to overlook and deny my rights."

De Ruse listened in silence. Though he might not perhaps accompany Godfrey to the very extent of his arguments, yet he could not refuse his admiration of the feelings which prompted them. He wished ardently for the power of benefiting his companion, and soothing that wounded spirit which was so ready in stepping forwards for the advantage of others. It was, however, out of the question. He was in no condition to be a benefactor. His own life depended

on the good-will and assistance of others.

The pleasurable sensations arising from visiting the scenes of his earliest impressions, soon overcame all unavailing regrets, and Godfrey, as he opened the little green gate that led to the door of the farm-house, had entirely recovered his former tranquillity. He was received with a hearty welcome by the present possessor and his sister; and their business being stated to the former in a whisper, he replied by a significant nod, and an expression of cordial acquiescence in the plan proposed.

"You will be as snug here," said the good Master Firmly, advancing towards his guest, "as heart could wish. We have no visitors—and no neighbours, except the lone house, and no one but the old butler and cook live there now. You may shoot, and fish, and go out as much as you please. Nobody will think

it worth their while to molest you. We have no justices here. The last lord did all himself, and the present never comes down that we know of much, and so every thing goes on in its own way. Judy and I will do our best to make you comfortable."

The sister curtsied low, and smiled good humouredly. De Ruse could not but congratulate himself on his good fortune. The form of introduction being over, he took Godfrey aside, and expressed, in very warm terms, his sense of all the material benefits he had so unexpectedly received at his hands. Godfrey stopped him short.

"Do not say so much," said he, "about what is really so insignificant. I shudder, even now, when I reflect how nearly I was the cause of your capture at the fords. I got acquainted by mere chance, both with the place of your retreat and the intentions of your enemies.

656.

I was determined your own eyes should convince you of the extent of your danger. Every thing has turned out well. Here at least you are safe. No one can cross over to molest you without my knowledge, and you may depend upon hearing every thing that goes on."

"But Miss Kemyss! the young lady at Hurstwood?" replied De Ruse. "You said you would convey a note from me. I am particularly anxious she should be made aware—that is, that she may be put upon her guard. I know something that concerns her much."

"Depend upon me for that," answered Godfrey; "I will endeavour to see her myself, as soon as I return."

After partaking of the morning's repast, the party broke up. The farmer, who was a tall, strait, fresh-looking man, went to superintend his straw yard — his sister retired to the dairy—and De Ruse, wishing to reconnoitre the country a

little, accompanied Godfrey a part of his way back to the shore. We will leave them here, however, and turn our eyes to events which were at this time transacting on the other side of the water.

CHAP. III.

THAT very able and nice observer of human nature, Dr. Swift, has, throughout the greater part of his inestimable works, conveyed to us as clear an idea of the state of political opinion in the age of which we are writing, as could be produced by the pen of the best informed and most accurate historian. The nation was divided between two great and powerful factions, — the tories and the whigs. Within the vortex of these two names every body was as a matter of course included, and though, as the great author above-mentioned asserts, "that whoever hath examined the conduct and proceedings of both parties for some years past, whether in or out of power, cannot well conceive it *possible* to go far towards the extremes of either, without offering some

violence to his integrity or understanding;" yet such was the ferment of public feeling, that many moderate men, approving or disapproving alternately the conduct of one party or the other, were yet obliged for fear of consequences to shelter themselves beneath one name and faction, however repugnant to their real sentiments and feelings of independence.

The whigs professing moderation, an abhorrence of persecution, and thinking it a hardship that those who differed only in a few ceremonies and speculations should be denied the privilege and profit of serving their country in the highest employments of state, drew after them the whole body of dissenters and freethinkers, which latter are not, to use the words of the author just quoted, so over nice to distinguish between an unlimited freedom of *conscience*, and an unlimited freedom of *opinion*.

The tories, on the other hand, firmly

supported episcopacy as an apostolical institution, and were uncommonly adverse to those sects, whom they reproached as having at once destroyed their constitution, and by too indiscreet a zeal for reformation, defaced the primitive model of the church. They professed great veneration for monarchical government in the common course of succession, and bore a hearty repugnance to republican schemes.

It was the violence and extravagance of these two factions, which, during the reign of Queen Anne, and the succeeding one of George the First, filled the nation with clamours and discontents, brought many illustrious characters to the scaffold, and even shook the throne itself to its very foundation. It is scarcely, therefore, to be wondered at, if in times like these no individual rights, no private virtues, no public claims, were regarded, except their acknowledgement tended in some way or other to the in-

terests of the party in power; and thus each faction in turn suffered for actions, as the scales were balanced one way or another, which, during the pre-eminence of their own party, were deemed highly meritorious, and perfectly constitutional.

In this disordered state of public affairs, therefore, when party zeal warranted and even converted into virtues the most abominable enormities, the self-interested and dishonourable views of young Pennington, possessed an admirable occasion for their successful and even legal accomplishment; and he well knew, that the murder of a rebel tory, under whatever circumstances, would be any thing but a crime in the eyes of the existing government. Nay, it was a positive merit to execute the vengeance of the law upon one, who by his flight and concealment, gave indubitable proofs of a knowledge of his own guilt.

Upon this mode of reasoning ground-

ing his future security, and anxious to remove the only obstacle that now interrupted his succession to the Hurstwood estates, he had been indefatigable in his enquiries after the fugitive's place of concealment. That De Ruse was the man who so narrowly escaped capture at the "bridge of Barle," he at the time suspected, and was afterwards confirmed in these suspicions by the embarrassment of Rachel when questioned on the subject.

Reuben, who was a dependent of the Penningtons, had betrayed his guest, and nothing could equal the disappointment of Julius when he found afterwards, that in missing his political foe, he had likewise let slip a most favourable opportunity of effecting the ruin of one who was at once the rival of his love, and the claimant of his possessions. This, as we have stated, redoubled his exertions. How he possessed himself of the secret of De Ruse's retreat at Kilbank never

came to light. There was probably treachery and corruption even there.

His mortification, however, was extreme on this second failure; and as he pursued his lonely ride from the sea shore towards St. Marions, reflections deep and vexatious could not fail of obtruding themselves. He felt that he passionately loved Rachel, even independently of the interested motives which in the first instance dictated his addresses. If he did not step forward now, and act with vigour, she was lost to him for ever! Convinced as he was that a disposition to intimacy had existed between De Ruse and her, even previous to the former's escape at the bridge, Julius very naturally argued, that a residence together for three weeks at Kilbank, and that too under circumstances uncommonly favourable to an incipient attachment, must have very much forwarded, if not indeed decidedly produced, feelings of that nature, between two persons

so exactly calculated to please each other.

There was madness in the thought. Jealousy sent the blood in full tide to his heart, and absorbed at the moment every other feeling. He had previously resolved upon violent measures, and now determined to seek an interview with Lady Anna, instead of returning to St. Marions, confident that he could by artifice, false representation, and persuasion, so far work upon the weakness and prejudices of the aunt, as materially to forward his views with regard to the niece. Hurstwood, Rachel, and the Norland property, were at stake, and surely they were deserving of the greatest efforts of which human exertion was capable.

Absorbed in these and similar reflections, Julius threaded the paths of Hurstwood chase, till the sun overtopping the hills, assured him of a reception at the mansion. He arrived there. John Drew took his jaded steed, and an old matron

who was dignified with the name of housekeeper, ushered him into the breakfast-room. He sent up his message to her ladyship, with an apology for so early a visit. "He wished to speak with her on an affair of importance."

Julius, when left to himself, walked to the window. It opened upon a lawn communicating with the flower-garden on the right, and displaying in front the lengthened vistas of a noble and extensive park. Every thing, however, wore the appearance of long neglect, and nature, uncurbed by art, flourished every where in untamed luxuriance.

During the prosperity of the Hurstwood family, no expence had been spared to add to the magnificence and splendour of their abode. Of this, the rich architectural decorations of the exterior of the mansion, the mouldings, the carved work, the embossed ceilings, and the spacious entertaining rooms of the interior, gave ample evidence; while the

noble woods and antique avenues without, gave an air of uniformity and consistency to the whole.

The admiration which sights of this description seldom fails of producing, peculiarly impressed Julius at the present moment. Whether the fear of losing what he had so long looked upon as his own, served to enhance its value in his eyes, we will not decide; but he felt as he gazed, that he had never seen what he admired more; that Hurstwood ought to satisfy the most ambitious mind; and that if he could once ensure undisturbed possession of its fair manors and its noble mansion, and plant Rachel Kemyss there as the sharer of all its delights, nothing more would be wanting.

The entrance of Lady Anna in her morning deshabillé disturbed reflections which were becoming uneasy. But they had served still further to fortify his previous intentions, and he determined that

no time should be lost in forwarding the advancement of his schemes.

Lady Anna was a great admirer of young Mr. Pennington, both from his being the only person in the world who seemed to think her worth a little occasional gallant attention, and from what indeed enhanced the former, his being the reputed heir of Hurstwood and St. Marions. She was by no means insensible of the fineness of his person and of the graces of his manner ; and she once declared to Rachel, that had not the vast disparity of their ages put the matter somewhat out of the question, she did not know what objection there could be to his becoming the actual brother-in-law of the present Lord Norland. It was an honour however not very likely to be solicited, and she did not therefore suffer her mind to dwell further upon it. Her succeeding ideas were more unequivocal. Her niece would do just as well. The

loss certainly in this exchange would be to Julius, the gain decidedly Rachel's. Since the match was eligible, and *she* thought so, it would be the extreme of hardihood and indiscretion to throw any obstacle in the way. Her own views, she conceived, would be answered by the connection. Rachel's household would, of course, be entirely at her disposal; and the young couple would conceive themselves honoured by her presence and countenance. It must be.

Rachel's conduct, however, in the affair had exceeded all her ideas of disobedience, waywardness, and folly. Her anger surpassed even her disappointment. She could crush her to the very earth for this unheard-of insolence. Of disappointment she felt little; — she was resolved not to be disappointed. Rachel's destiny was cast, and by fair means or foul she should be forced to yield to it. Yet — *force* her niece to be the wife of Julius — the mistress of Hurstwood?

The idea was preposterous. The girl was mad — was infatuated! — Whatever means were adopted, they could not come under the term of force! No person could be forced to their own good. It was *her* duty to use *wholesome persuasion.*

Under this idea, as a preparatory step, she thought it good to alarm her niece by the silence of a determined neglect, never doubting but that so serious a symptom of her high displeasure would recall Rachel to her duty. She began, however, to think that her absence had now been very long — her angry feelings were gaining ground — she had reason already to suspect her own absolute influence, and was, in fact, in that very state of irritation, which it was the grand object of Julius by his visit and representations to excite.

A great deal of unmeaning compliment, and common-place courtesy having passed between them — apologies on the

one side for so early a visit, and professions on the other of the great honour, unbounded pleasure, &c., which it conferred—and under circumstances too—Julius at length prefaced his business, by enquiring for Miss Kemyss. Before, however, Lady Anna could return an answer, he continued—

"But why need *I* enquire, who perhaps, know so much better than even your ladyship? Alas! where is Miss Kemyss, and what is Miss Kemyss doing? are questions which, if they were put to me, I should deeply regret the obligation to answer."

"For heaven's sake, tell me," exclaimed Lady Anna, alarmed, "what has happened to that wicked, that perverse, that abominable girl? I really should not be surprized at any disgrace she may chuse to bring upon herself and her noble house. It is very strange; but she has now been absent on a visit at Kilbank three weeks, and without my permission

too; and I have not heard a word of her movements. I was too indignant, Mr. Julius, at her conduct towards yourself, to honour her with the slightest notice till her proud heart was bent to obedience. Surely, the foolish girl has not, urged by despair at my neglect ——"

Lady Anna stopped in expectation of her companion speaking. But he spoke not. His countenance expressed surprize, and perhaps half a smile of derision played upon his lips.

"What has she done — what is she doing?" continued her ladyship. "I am quite prepared to hear any thing, only relieve me from my suspense!"

"I do not know," said Julius, affecting a mournful accent, "that I have any thing to communicate which can be peculiarly ungrateful to your ladyship. I cannot for a moment suppose but that the proceedings at Kilbank are both known to you, and have also received your sanction."

"What proceedings?—I have already informed you, that I am perfectly ignorant of Rachel's motions during the last three weeks."

"Your ladyship must pardon me," replied Julius, "if I am somewhat incredulous in spite of your assertion. I feel certain that Miss Kemyss dared not have so acted without the sanction of so highly respectable a relative as yourself. You too,—who stand in the light of a parent—her only guardian—her only friend!"

This speech had the desired effect. It roused the most implacable feelings in the aunt towards her niece, and prepared her well for what followed. Conscious of her ignorance of what was alluded to, yet determined not again to own it, she continued silent,—every sinew and wrinkle of her shrivelled face and neck displaying the angry motions of her feelings.

"If you are not fully aware," conti-

nued Julius, — "nay, if you do not approve of what is, or rather of what has been, going forward at Kilbank during Mr. Kirkbye's absence, I can only say that you are the most insulted, most neglected, most pitiable, of human beings."

"What can you mean by all this?" cried Lady Anna, passion almost choaking her utterance. "This is the first time the words insult, neglect, or pity were ever applied to the family of Kemyss! What do you mean, sir? — Speak out, and I think, I can soon prove, that I am not one to suffer either insult or neglect!"

"Is it possible then, that you are unacquainted with your niece's attachment? Are you not aware that her motive in visiting Kilbank was to meet her lover there; and that there they have now been these three weeks enjoying themselves, no doubt, the more, from the trick they have so ingeniously put upon you?"

As he continued, Lady Anna's face was inflamed with passion.

"And does your ladyship know who this lover is? The very same Danish rebel, an outcast from his own country, and a condemned traitor in this, whom I was sent in pursuit of some time ago by a writ from the government. You *must* know of the private meetings between this man and your niece, at the bridge of Barle? A plan so regularly and daringly acted upon, could not altogether have escaped your notice, Lady Anna? The more I think upon the subject, the more am I convinced that Miss Kemyss dared not have acted thus without your knowledge and connivance; and I came here with the mere intention of gently remonstrating with you, on the total failure of all my flattering prospects of being allied to your noble and illustrious house."

Lady Anna was totally confounded, and with a desperate effort of self-controul she sat silent, till Julius, in terms

the most exaggerated, and accompanied with inferences the most unjust, detailed to her all the occurrences which had come to his knowledge since the arrival of De Ruse in the country. Many things he added which were imaginary, and such as had their source in some measure from jealous fears; but altogether, he succeeded in laying before her ladyship such a plausible story, that she never for a moment doubted her niece's guilt.

We will not disgust our readers with a detail of what bitter invectives marked the overflowings of Lady Anna's passionate displeasure. With great exultation did Julius mark the facility with which she was worked upon, and he augured well for the success of his measures. Nothing, he knew, could save him but bold and decisive proceedings. If he could once secure Rachel as his own, the Norland estates would follow of couse; and in that case, even should De

Ruse escape, he was still nobly provided for.

Lady Anna having quite exhausted herself with the violent expression of her more violent feelings, at length threw herself back in her chair, and in a peevish and desponding tone, asked Julius what could be done.

"I am willing," said she, "to go any lengths to punish this foolish, this impudent girl. Only suggest something, Mr. Pennington, and it will console me. I have no one to look up to in this business but you. I am incapable of acting — totally so. Never was such an excess of ingratitude known!"

"I cannot presume to suggest any thing to one of your ladyship's acknowledged judgment," was the modest reply of Julius. He knew it would be easy enough to put his own plans into her ladyship's own mouth.

"Did you not mention the necessity

of your niece's immediate return to Hurstwood?"

"Did I?" replied Lady Anna. "O yes! I must have mentioned that. That of course. Thank you for reminding me. Rachel must not stay one moment longer with those abominable Kirkbyes."

She rung the bell. John Drew was sent off that moment with positive orders not to return without the young lady.

"Yet how shall we be able to break off entirely this horrible connection? The girl has disgraced herself. — She will never be looked upon again."

"Not quite so bad as that," replied Julius. "Unworthily as I have been treated, with your ladyship's permission, I am still willing to renew my pretensions to the honour of your alliance. Your penetration and uncommon knowledge of the world will naturally prepare you for much opposition, and many obstacles to any plan you may be induced

to form for the benefit of your niece, providing it meets not with her concurrence. But you have too much firmness to be dismayed."

"If you are still willing, Mr. Pennington," replied Lady Anna, "to connect yourself with my niece, I will allow neither opposition nor obstacles to be raised on her part. *She* act for herself in a matter which so vitally concerns her family! No.—We have more sense than to trust in such hands our united respectability and consequence. Take her, Mr. Julius—take her as our gift. She shall be your's by fair means or foul; and I know little indeed of my noble brother the Earl of Norland, if he does not approve the steps we have taken."

"I thank your ladyship; nor can I enough admire and reverence the spirit and liberality of your sentiments. In common cases, I am inclined to think with you, that little trouble would be required to bring about so desirable an

event; but,—Miss Kemyss is no ordinary female. I am mistaken if, beneath that mild and gentle exterior, there is not concealed a spirit at once daring and contradictory. If it were otherwise, she could never have thus requited the kindness and condescension with which you have ever treated her. So extraordinary a mind calls for extraordinary measures."

This conversation continued for some time longer, till Julius, having completely persuaded Lady Anna to become the tool of his intended perfidy, a part indeed to which her own bad passions strongly invited her, left Hurstwood to put in motion his several plans, and renew his enquiries after the fugitive.

CHAP. IV.

John Drew, on his arrival at Kilbank, found his young mistress in a state of great agitation and terror. The events of the preceding night had been most distressing. Mrs. Kirkbye's alarm and Robert's indignation at the domiciliary visit which the officers of justice had thought proper to pay them at the instigation of the Penningtons, had been excessive. The former trembled at the future consequences of the discovery of De Ruse's concealment, while the latter could scarcely be withheld by any entreaties from proceeding immediately to St. Marions, and inflicting instant vengeance upon the authors of this insult. Mrs. Kirkbye, happy in the escape of the intended victim, now saw only the danger of a downfall to her own house;

while her son, with all the ardour of youth and a generous spirit, was given up to feelings of indignation, heedless entirely of future consequences.

Rachel joined, and sympathized alternately with both her friends. As no proof could be brought forward of De Ruse's actual residence at Kilbank, she hoped it would not be severely visited upon the family; indeed, Mr. Kirkbye's active support of the existing government, was sufficient to exonerate him from any suspicion of treasonable purposes. Her solicitude therefore was principally directed towards De Ruse himself.

Never had she known till the present moment how deeply her heart was interested in his welfare. Now that he was gone, she knew how to value his presence. Kilbank had lost its greatest charm; and when John Drew's arrival was announced, she blushed to thinkthat it would be almost agreeable to leave those scenes for the present, which, under

circumstances, would recall many painful reminiscences. Her departure too was opportune in another respect. The following morning brought an express from London, with an account of Mr. Kirkbye's sudden and dangerous illness, and his desire for their immediate attendance. Rachel, as if prognosticating the evils to come, bid farewell to her kind friends with tears in her eyes, and after many mutual wishes for their soon meeting again, she rode sorrowfully towards Hurstwood.

As they passed the park gate, and gained the public road, John Drew placed himself near enough to his young lady to be heard distinctly, and with a courteous touch of the hat, enquired if she knew "who had been visiting the Hall that morning?"

"I had a mind to tell you, Miss Rachel," said he, with a grin which meant to imply a great deal, "because I knew it would please you, and we're often in

want of something of that sort at Hurstwood, if I may make bold to say so. Mr. Julius came by seven o'clock this morning, and if we just put on to a gallop, may be we shall catch him there yet. His horse came in as jaded as if he had been a hundred miles without drawing bit. It's a clear shame, however. I tell you, Miss Rachel, I'd rather be a galley slave than a young man's horse."

"I have no wish to hurry, John," said Rachel, turning pale at the unwelcome information. "Is young Mr. Pennington going to spend the day with my aunt?"

"No, not he, indeed; though I'll be bound for it he would give a good deal to stay. He told me not to take the saddle off his horse, but just to throw a cloth over him, as he was obliged to be at St. Marions by breakfasting time. He must have been a long way;—he was as pale as a sheet, and looked fitter for bed than breakfast."

Rachel did not answer, and the old man resumed his station in the rear. What could Julius want with her aunt at an hour so unusual, so untimely? De Ruse's expressions concerning him rushed at once upon her mind, and she felt as if some great evil was impending.

Her heart sunk as the door of the great hall, closing upon her once more, shut her up with misery and Lady Anna. Her aunt refusing to see her, Rachel retired to her own room, her mind perfectly free from the consciousness of having given offence, and auguring nothing particular from a conduct which was too usual to create any peculiar alarm.

It was not till evening that Lady Anna deigned to visit her niece. The information which occasionally burst forth amid the long strain of insulting invective and scurrility with which she welcomed her victim, was sufficient to convince Rachel of the purport of young Pennington's

visit. To the repeated questions concerning the extent of her connection with De Ruse, she answered nothing. Concerning his rank, his residence at Kilbank, and her meetings with him in the valley, she was equally silent. Silence, in fact, was her only weapon, where candour would have involved herself and others, and where reason had to wage a vain warfare with weakness, pride, and prejudice.

Lady Anna's feelings became, if possible, more and more irritated by this seeming obstinacy of her niece. If she had before a little compunction remaining as to the arbitrary and unwarrantable proceedings she was about to authorize, now she had none. Her narrow views, her tyrannical disposition, made her look upon her niece as a criminal, as one who rebelled against her just authority, and pity had never fixed her abode in so stubborn, so selfish a heart.

The timid deer, when too hardly

pressed, is frequently known to turn upon its pursuers. Thus the gentle, the yielding Rachel, taunted, reproached, insulted, and threatened, found it to be her duty equally to herself and her aunt, to express her disapprobation of a mode of treatment, which, under any circumstances, was unwarrantable from one human creature to another. She began to suspect, from the violence of Lady Anna's expressions, that they would at length vent themselves in action; and that one who was so completely under the guidance of inveterate prejudice and unworthy passions, ought not to be suffered to proceed unchecked in her progress. To her aunt, she was bound by no ties of gratitude or affection. Since her arrival at Hurstwood, her life had been one series of mortification, disquietude, and oppression. The active malice of this disagreeable woman had envied her every enjoyment, however innocent, and, if possible, contrived to debar her of it; and

her forbearance, her never-ceasing attentions, had produced no other effect, than that of causing still more to be expected from her.

"Madam," said she, when her aunt had at length come to a pause, "I am exceedingly sorry to be urged to make a reply in my own behalf. I do not, however, intend to give any explanation as to what you require of me. I know of no right which any one has to direct my affections. I cannot allow myself to be deserving of the harshness with which I am treated. I have always endeavoured to do my duty towards you as your niece, and I have no right to expect this return. As to Mr. Julius Pennington, I owe him no gratitude for his ungenerous interference; and I think it my duty at once to state, that he shall never be allowed, with my consent, to approach me otherwise than as an indifferent person."

Rachel stopped, almost surprized at

the vehemence of her own expressions. With the last word, however, her spirit was gone. Mortified, agitated, and uneasy, she sunk back in her chair, and gave way to a violent burst of tears.

Lady Anna now rose from her seat with affected dignity and importance, and looking upon the beautiful form weeping before her without one emotion of pity, pronounced solemnly as she left the room, "I can tell you, young woman, what the end of this obstinacy will be. You shall marry young Pennington yet, take my word for it, as a proper reparation to your friends for the guilt of loving a beggarly foreigner and a traitor. Unheard-of audacity! Prepare yourself for obeying my wishes. I consider you as pledged to Mr. Pennington, and it will be my fault if a few days do not make you his."

She departed with this threat, and left Rachel bewildered, alarmed, and irresolute how to act. One moment's reflec-

tion was sufficient to convince her, that Julius would be seconded by her aunt in his most desperate schemes; and from what had passed, she felt prepared for some dreadful catastrophe. How well had De Ruse foreseen all this! How anxiously did she wish that some measures had been taken to provide against it. What was to be done? She felt herself alone and unprotected. She was a very secure victim to the malice of those who were plotting against her. Her only friends, the Kirkbyes, were gone, and before they could return, all might be over. Her situation was dreadful! Urged at this critical moment to sift every expedient, her thoughts at length introduced De Ruse's request, that she would apply to him in case of any difficulty. There was no one certainly on whose activity, honour, and readiness she could more rely; but how mortifying it was to have nothing to fly to but the casual assistance of an almost stranger.—Lord

Norland!—He was her uncle, her father's own brother! The idea, however, passed in a moment, and her fond thoughts again rested upon De Ruse. "Only that I knew he would endanger himself, on my account, I would certainly ask his advice. Yet even that would too plainly speak a dependence upon him, which, alas! I must not feel, much less express. No—no, that must not be! Yet how very, very forlorn I am!"

Many plans did she form, and many did she abandon ere the old hall clock struck the hour of eleven. Without having as yet fixed upon any course of action to be pursued, she was about to prepare for retiring to rest. Her head ached violently. A gentle rap at the door, however, interrupted her, and she was surprized at the cautious entrance of Ruth, the old housekeeper.

"God bless you, Miss Rachel," said she, in a low voice, and closing the door carefully after her;—"what, not in bed

yet? A heavy heart makes little slumber, true enough. You need not look so frightened; mistress, by good luck, has been in bed these two hours, and I was just going, when something happened, that made me think of coming up here first."

"What can it be?" said Rachel, observing the old woman carefully searching for something beneath the folds of her kerchief.

"O here it is," said Ruth, drawing forth a curiously folded note. "I was just napping a little by the kitchen fire, when on a sudden I was awoke by a scratching on the window. I looked up, and on seeing a man's face staring straight in at me, I thought I should have gone out of my senses. He held this note up, however, and said he had business with my young mistress. I did not chuse to let him in, but opened the little casement and took his note between the bars, and there he is standing at this moment, for

he says he will not go away without an answer."

Ruth, who had both a very high opinion of her young lady, and was exceedingly attached to her, without busying herself with any surmises, or being troublesome with her enquiries, delivered the note, and saying that she would now go down and give the poor fellow a small matter to eat and drink, left Rachel to the undisturbed perusal of this unexpected communication. She opened it with a trembling hand, and read as follows :

"Miss Kemyss will recollect what I suggested with regard to the probability of young Mr. Pennington's intentions. Fortune, in enabling me to escape the many snares laid for my destruction, has likewise conveyed to my knowledge some secret intelligence. A plot is now forming for the forcible abduction of Miss Kemyss. Nothing can save her but the immediate adoption of some strong mea-

sure. Whatever her prudence or spirit may suggest, I beg leave again to offer my own assistance, and that of my friend, who is the bearer of this. DE RUSE.

Now were all Rachel's fears realized. An organized plan was now on the very point of being put in execution, and she had been recalled from Kilbank for the very purpose of being more easily ensnared. How disgracefully, how dishonourably, how imprudently was her aunt acting! Not merely consenting to, but even plotting the shameful sacrifice of an unprotected orphan, the only child of her own brother! It was really past belief; — it was monstrous! — Rachel possessed energy of mind when it was called for. The villany of Julius Pennington, and the tyranny of her aunt, forced her into a speedy determination. She sat down, and in a hurried and agitated hand, wrote the following answer to De Ruse's note.

"Never can I sufficiently express my

gratitude for your kindness. Sincerely do I congratulate you on your miraculous escape. O that I may be as fortunate! Your valuable information has determined my proceedings. I shall leave Hurstwood immediately, and seek the protection of my uncle, Lord Norland. Your offer of assistance is very kind. Should it be required, I will let you know. I write in great agitation. Adieu."

Scarcely had she finished this note, ere the housekeeper returned.

"The young man," said she, "will neither eat nor drink; and perhaps it is as well, for we having nothing very nice to give him. He says, however, that if he could speak with you for one moment, perhaps it might be better for all parties. I do not pretend to know what it means; but I am sure of one thing, that if Miss Rachel has any thing to do with it, it is all right."

"Thank you, Ruth, for your good opinion," replied Rachel, trying to force

a smile. "This affair is, indeed, something in which I am very materially concerned; and I am sure you would feel for me if you knew all."

"Feel for you!" replied Ruth warmly. "Indeed I do feel for you, every day of my life. For a sweet young lady like you to be shut up and bandied about by such a — I beg pardon — as my mistress, and to see you take it all so sweetly, I could cry like a child many a time, as I told John Drew only yesterday. It's a shame, Miss Rachel, it's a burning shame!"

"Tell the young man, Ruth," said Rachel, willing to change the subject, "that I am sorry it is out of my power to see him now; but say that I shall be riding in the park about an hour before sun-set to-morrow. And Ruth," continued she, looking anxiously in the old woman's face, "I know I can depend —"

"Depend upon me?" said Ruth, "Yes, yes — never fear me. Not a word

shall pass my lips, not even to John Drew himself. When there's need, there is not a closer mouth, or a closer fist in the parish than mine. I always had that character. But go to bed, Miss Raçhel, for you look very pale, and I'll bring you your breakfast early, before you get up."

The door closed. Rachel obeyed the good woman's directions; but sleep, "the comforter that seldom visits sorrow," was denied to her. Images of terror filled her imagination, and the first peep of dawn found her ruminating upon her real and anticipated misfortunes, and wondering how it was that they should be so strangely, so unaccountably, connected with those of De Ruse.

The events of the next morning confirmed Rachel's fears. Her aunt commanded her presence at the breakfast table; and when pale, discomposed, and uneasy, she obeyed the summons, she noted, with additional concern, the veil of hypocrisy with which her unworthy

relative endeavoured at once to conceal and promote her designs. But Lady Anna had not the sense to enable her to act her part well; and all the attempts which she forced herself to make towards conciliation and gentle persuasion, only the more convinced Rachel that her own doom was fixed. She shuddered at the idea of the extremities to which her aunt's imprudence was urging her, and the very awkward and perilous measures which it would oblige her to adopt: yet she felt that she would prefer even being indebted to the friendship of De Ruse, rather than be exposed to the ruinous consequences of the malice and treacherous designs of Julius, and the heedless prejudices and tyranny of Lady Anna.

In vain did the latter condescend to lay before her the expediency, the prudence, the splendour of the proposed connection—the happiness it could not but confer upon herself, and the pleasure it must necessarily create to her friends.

"Consider all this well, Rachel," continued her ladyship — "reflect too, that you are as yet young, and unacquainted with the world, and therefore ought to be obliged to your friends, if they take the trouble to judge for you. By the unworthy attachment you have formed, both your relations and yourself are degraded. You owe us, therefore, some sacrifice in atonement of your offence. But what is more than all, remember this — that you are pledged to young Mr. Pennington, and that whatever you now chuse to think, I have promised I will give him my support, even should he proceed to extremities, of which you can be but little aware. You are his, in fact, at the present moment, and it would be more prudent for you to submit with a good grace, and conciliate his future regard, than to oblige him to force you to the altar — a mortification which in your subsequent intercourse, he will not be likely to forget."

"I am truly sorry, my dear aunt," replied Rachel, with a dignity and firmness that almost startled Lady Anna, "to hear you express sentiments so derogatory to yourself, and so arbitrary towards me. I have not—O no! I cannot have deserved them!—Yet, I would not have you for one moment conceive, that I intend to submit to the consequences which they infer. Mr. Julius Pennington has no claim either upon my esteem or my affection; and I shall never voluntarily hold the least communication with him for the future. I disapprove equally of his principles and conduct; and let me warn you to forbear involving yourself in a course of strange and tyrannical transactions, which, however they may succeed at present, will in the end bring their own punishment along with them. I solemnly protest against all interference in my disposal of my own fate; and I give you timely warning, that if pressed too far, I shall be forced to adopt mea-

sures for my security, which will reflect but little credit upon the parties who urge me to be desperate. Reflect, my dear aunt, I entreat you, before it is too late!"

Lady Anna, after a moment's pause, darted upon her niece a look of scorn and derision.

"Did I send for you here, foolish, impertinent girl, to ask your advice, or to condescend to offer mine? I have quite given you up now. Since you do not chuse to be persuaded, other means shall be tried. I have done — Mr. Pennington shall manage you as he can. Remember, I am not answerable for the consequences of your obstinacy."

Lady Anna left the room with a starched air, and a face burning with anger, and Rachel retained her seat, a prey to all the wretchedness of her situation. How deeply did she now regret the absence of the Kirkbyes. She had only one course of action to pursue, and

that, to the innate delicacy of her mind, offered almost insuperable objections. It was to claim the assistance of De Ruse in escaping from Hurstwood, and putting herself under the protection of her uncle. She knew, she could not but know, that De Ruse dearly loved her; and she was, perhaps, on this account, the more unwilling to allow his interference. It might be indirectly authorizing expectations, which, perhaps, she could never realize. Yet, to be forced into a marriage with Julius Pennington! — the alternative was dreadful. Might some intermediate plan be adopted, which would avoid both these extremes? — To accomplish this, she was willing to endure much that was inconvenient and unpleasant; yet how was it to be done? To fly she was resolved upon; — yet how, and by whom accompanied and protected, that was the question.

Rachel thought long and deeply; yet the more she thought, the more was she

bewildered. To fly—and from her home too! To fly—she scarcely knew whither—to a relation who had scarcely ever noticed even her existence—a man too, noted for his eccentricities,.and who was as likely to cast her off as to receive and protect her! Her situation was truly pitiable;—she was almost in despair. The more she considered the relative situation of herself and De Ruse, the more was she determined to accomplish her purpose without his assistance, if it was possible. She was not too proud to be indebted to his kindness.—Ah, no! His attention she could not but confess would be soothing and agreeable, and his company delightful. Yet—many things put it out of the question—she would think of it no longer.

While engaged in these reflections, the housekeeper entered the room.—Rachel was too much abstracted to notice her presence. Ruth beheld with dismay the wan, the agitated countenance

of her dear young lady, and connecting present appearances with the events of the preceding night, immediately and very naturally concluded that all could not be as it ought to be. She spoke. Rachel started. She was still thinking of De Ruse. With a faint smile she welcomed the faithful domestic, while Ruth closing the door, thus gave way to her thoughts.

"Come, come, Miss Rachel, whatever you may say, I am sure all is not going on right. I know you better than to think all this sorrowing and weeping is for nothing. Something is in the wind that you don't like, I know there is; else why should that young Pennington and mistress be shut up at this very moment in the library, while you are moting here, and crying your pretty eyes as dim as two stars in a mist. I am but a poor, weak old woman, but I would gladly give the short space of life I have left to serve you. If they use you ill, I am sure I shall

cry my old eyes out, for as John Drew says, what have we in the world to depend upon but you? We are both fond enough of this old place, but mistress is really past living with; and if it had not been for your sweet smile that so often raises our down-cast hearts, we should have made a flit of it many a weary year ago. Tell me, Miss Rachel, are they going to use you ill? If they are, may be we can hit on something to stop them. Perhaps I am bold in asking you any questions, but I cannot bear to see you in this taking, so never mind me if it is not quite agreeable."

Rachel for some time had no power to answer. The language of affection was so new to her at Hurstwood, that it sounded like music in her ears, and vibrated to her heart. The gentleness, the insinuating softness of her manners, had, indeed, won the affections of all with whom she was in the habit of frequent intercourse, and the general feeling which

was entertained towards her by the domestics and others, was often the means of creating a greater degree of forbearance towards her aunt. Lady Anna was heartily disliked, and deservedly so.

A thought suddenly struck Rachel. Her intentions were desperate; — why should she then shrink at means which were equally so. "Ruth," said she, at length, addressing the housekeeper who stood by watching the many changes in the expression of her features, "you have it indeed in your power to serve me; but before I mention how, tell me, are you willing to leave Hurstwood at an hour's notice?"

"Ay — and at a minute's notice, if it is to go with you, or to do you a service. I think I know how matters stand now. If you leave this place, Miss Rachel, without me, I shall not stay a week after you. I would not live with mistress by herself, if she promised me all the silks and sattins that she says she once

wore in her younger days. No — marry would I!"

Rachel, after some further consideration, thought that no better or more decorous plan could be adopted than that of making the housekeeper the companion of her flight. If Ruth had no great knowledge of the world; if she was equally with herself ignorant of the modes and fashions, the ways and means which enable the traveller to make his path straight and easy before him, at least she would be a kind of protector, and at once exempt her from the awkward yet delightful companionship of De Ruse, and the extreme hazard and inconvenience of undertaking so formidable a step alone and unsupported.

Her mind, once made up on this subject, she unfolded such parts of her situation as were necessary to explain to Ruth the reason of her determination of leaving Hurstwood; and finding that she entered very warmly into her views,

she asked her advice as to the plan they had better adopt. After much discussion it was agreed upon, that the affair should be kept as much to themselves as possible. Not even John Drew was to know, being, as he often expressed himself, "main frightened with her ladyship, and no more able to stand her look, than if he were a bird, and she were a snake."

At the time we are talking of, there was a covered cart at St. Marions for the reception of passengers, which started from the sign of the Hurstwood Arms thrice a week, and met a London conveyance about five and twenty miles off. In this it was agreed that they must take places. But the difficulty which now arose seemed almost insuperable. To be seen at St. Marions was certain destruction to their plans. As soon as their departure was discovered, they might easily be traced, and so slow was the progress of "the Fly," that they might at any time be over taken even by a pursuer on foot.

Their plan therefore must be, either to reject the St. Marions conveyance altogether, or at least to meet it when it had proceeded some considerable distance from the town.

Yet how was this to be accomplished? Rachel recollected the young man who brought De Ruse's note. She determined to see him, and if necessary to claim his assistance in this emergency. Before, however, she could acquaint the housekeeper with this probable resource, a short, rapid step along the corridor, and the unceremonious entrance of Lady Anna interrupted this interesting tête a tête.

"What business have you here?" were her first words directed to the poor housekeeper, who by way of excuse begun fumbling in a set of drawers, as if looking for something. "Go down this moment and look after your kitchen. I am much mistaken if Miss Kemyss can-

not do without your assistance at present. You can be doing no good here."

A suspicious glance at Rachel, and the willing departure of the old woman, concluded this exordium. "Rachel, my dear," continued her ladyship, in an altered tone of astonishing condescension, "Mr. Julius Pennington is here. Will you grant him an interview? If you will, believe me, I shall be quite happy. Really the young man deserves it. His intentions are so honourable, so fair, so conciliating towards you. As a favour to myself, I beg you will see him."

At the word "honourable," Rachel's dark and expressive eyes were rivetted for a moment on her aunt's face. They spoke too eloquently to be misunderstood. In spite of herself, Lady Anna half averted her countenance, and paused after finishing the sentence. It was but for a moment. A bad heart, like a rushing torrent, soon overleaps all obstacles. She continued.

"I have been regretting, Rachel, that we have had any cause of disagreement lately. If I have been too harsh in my expressions, it arose merely from the extreme anxiety I feel for your welfare and the honour of the family. I will not attempt to bias you any longer. Only assure me that you have formed no connection with this foreigner?—that you are not in league with him in any of his desperate attempts? Did you but know, Rachel, what a ruffian he is, you would hate and despise him as heartily as I do. But I have the consolation to think he will soon be hanged; and if some of the Kirkbyes keep him company, I should not either be much surprized or much concerned."

Rachel turned deadly pale. Her fears magnified this malicious insinuation into an actual event, and her imagination was at once filled with the most distracting images. Julius Pennington was below, and he had probably come to announce

the capture and certain death of his supposed rival! It was beyond endurance shocking and terrific. She felt at that moment, that not only could she consent to see Julius, but that she could throw herself at his feet and beg, passionately beg, for the life of his victim. She felt, she now felt most keenly, what it was to love. She could not speak. Her aunt who, though without the least natural penetration yet could not but perceive her extreme agitation, immediately attributed it to an overpowering sense of her own condescension and kindness, and consequently anticipating the most pleasing results from the further prosecution of her hypocrisy, gave her time to recover a little, and then proceeded.

"I tell you, Rachel, that henceforth you shall act for yourself. Whatever imprudencies you may chuse to commit, you must be answerable for them yourself. Whatever happens to you, remember I am not accountable. You must

allow that in all this I am acting an indulgent rather than a prudent part. Only assure me, that you have not bound yourself by any foolish engagement to that unpardonable — that impudent rebel at Kilbank, and I shall not interfere further?"

Rachel again looked up in her aunt's face. The indignant and scrutinizing expression of her own, was now changed at this second glance to one of a different character. Surprize and doubt alone reigned there. Her eyes, however, soon again sought the ground. Doubt — surprize, vanished ; and she felt thoroughly convinced that Lady Anna's present expressions were only meant to act as a blind to her future intentions. To leave her to her own guidance, Rachel knew was never, from the first day of her residence at Hurstwood, at all accordant either with the disposition or the views of her aunt, and a moment's thought convinced her, that in proportion to the in-

dulgence shown her, so was the nearness of the danger by which she was threatened. The question, however, concerning De Ruse being repeated, she answered firmly, that "no engagement *had* taken place, and the bare suspicion of such an event, under the peculiar circumstances in which Mr. De Ruse was placed, could proceed from no other person than one, who in his whole conduct towards herself and others, had shown a meanness of spirit, and a total want of rectitude of principle, which entitled him to nothing but her contempt."

Rachel's firmness, nay, increasing firmness of expression with regard to Julius Pennington, had again nearly blown her aunt's passion into a flame. Aware, however, of the very equivocal, if not really dangerous part, she was about to act, the little sense she had, pointed out to Lady Anna the prudence of present restraint; and in a voice in which the bitterness of her feelings was only par-

tially concealed, she enquired, " Whether Rachel would so far oblige her as to consent to an interview with her rejected suitor ?"

Rachel paused a moment. For Lady Anna to ask a favour of her was so unusual, that her affectionate heart panted to confer it. She wished to show that she delighted in obedience, where obedience was proper. In the present case, however, it was out of the question. It would be wrong to consent to an interview without the least intention of giving encouragement; and when she brought to mind the very treacherous conduct of Julius, she found herself quite unequal to meet him otherwise than as one whom she despised. It was therefore better to decline the proposed interview altogether. She did so, and Lady Anna, without a look or a word, left the room.

This last effort of this notable guardian of a young niece, was intended, partly by the advice of Julius himself, to bring

about the accomplishment of that by fair means, which was determined upon at all hazards. Lady Anna too began to feel some scruples — not as to the performance of her plans, but as to their ultimate result. Rachel's firmness, and her declaration of resisting such tyranny to the last, had somewhat startled her. Tyrants are often cowards. She reflected upon her brother's character. It was decided and peremptory — sometimes passionate. Should an appeal be made to him by his injured niece, the result might be contrary to her wishes. It was, therefore, on the one hand, to try what conciliation would do; and on the other, to exonerate herself in the eyes of Rachel from the violence which she meditated, that she deigned to use such forbearance in her last interview, and even stooped so low from the hereditary pride of her illustrious house as to ask a favour. It had been done. The doom of Rachel Kemyss was now irrevocably fixed!

CHAP. V.

The evening was calm and beautiful, when Rachel mounted her palfrey, and commenced her intended expedition into the park. Heedless, however, of the thousand vernal charms by which she was surrounded, she pursued at a rapid pace a kind of bridle road, which, following the numerous windings of the river, approached the ford near the opposite domains of Kilbank. From this place she was aware that there was the nearest path to the shore; and hence she concluded, that De Ruses's friend would most probably be loitering here, instead of venturing upon the more open and circuitous road through the valley of the bridge of Barle.

When arrived within sight of the ferryman's cottage, she stopped and looked

anxiously around from a high bank which commanded a considerable extent of prospect. Her sensations at that moment were most galling and oppressive. Endued with a high share of sensibility, and a sense of propriety the most strict and upright, she felt an instinctive dislike of the measure she was pursuing. To give a stranger, a man whose character and situation was unknown to her, the meeting in so remote a spot; and by this too, plainly to concede to De Ruse a right to interfere in her concerns — this struck her so forcibly as she looked around, in trembling expectation, that she determined to return immediately, and adopt some more feasible scheme for accomplishing her purpose.

With all her loveliness and her superior qualities, Rachel was but a woman, and like most of the gentler sex, her courage could better display itself in endurance than in action. She turned, and had already descended the bank with some rapidity,

when a young man with his head uncovered, a shepherd's crook in his hand, and an encouraging smile of good-humour on his countenance, intercepted her path.

Events, though expected, yet often surprize us by their very rapidity. At the sight of what she had come fully prepared to see, Rachel trembled as much as if a footpad had demanded her purse. and though, as the appointment was her own proposing, it was her place to open the conference, yet she was totally incapable of sufficiently recovering herself, and detained the young man for some time in his respectful and expectant posture. At length, perceiving her agitation, he came forward, and in a voice soothing and attentive, begged her not be under the least alarm.

"I came to Hurstwood last night," said he, "in obedience to the wishes of one whom I can never sufficiently serve. If it were for his sake only, I should de-

light to be of any use to you; but Miss Kemyss is, herself, entitled to the utmost exertions of any who have the power to assist her. I know that there is a shameful plot in agitation; but villany often impedes its own progress, and little do those think, who are seeking your liberty and young Mr. Hurstwood's destruction, that they are counterplotted in all their schemes, and likely to be foiled in every object for which they are striving. Tell me then, in what we can be of service? Our lives are at your disposal. I too, lady, have my grievances as well as you, and my heart is not less engaged in the cause than are my principles of right and wrong."

As he spoke, Rachel felt re-assured, but scarcely venturing upon the main subject of the conference as yet, she enquired, "Whom he meant to designate by the name of young Mr. Hurstwood, as she was not aware of the existence of any of the family."

"I was mentioning Mr. De Ruse, by what I conceive to be his proper title. There is scarcely a doubt of his being the son of the last Mr. Hurstwood who inhabited the mansion. This is one reason of the inveterate hatred of the Penningtons. But time will disclose all, and sincerely do I wish that it will present likewise to some of us different prospects from what we now enjoy. But time flies, lady, and much may be done. What are your plans? How can we assist you?"

Rachel, though not without considerable hesitation, disclosed her intentions of putting herself under the protection of Lord Norland, and at the same time resolutely declining all personal attendance, said, that her only wish was to ask the advice of one more experienced than herself, as to the best manner of accomplishing her object. Godfrey listened attentively, and when she had finished, leaned upon his staff in an atti-

tude of deep reflection. There were many difficulties to be overcome. A step so important must be well considered. At length he spoke.

"I really cannot venture to give my advice so suddenly. Many obstacles present themselves. If you will favour me with another interview, I promise that all shall be arranged."

"But remember," said Rachel, "I stipulate to be without other company than my female attendant. You will confer a most particular favour upon me by attending to my wishes in this respect."

"Every thing shall be done that you desire — at least so far as it is attainable," replied Godfrey. "Yet there is danger in delay. I am induced to think that to-morrow evening, or the one ensuing, is fixed for the commencement of Mr. Julius Pennington's operations. We must anticipate him or you are lost. Would you venture to meet me here by day-break to-morrow, accompanied by

your companion, and prepared for immediate flight? I fear it is your only chance."

Rachel was terrified at the nearness of the anticipated danger. She could perceive the object of Julius in this bold manœuvre. After once separating her from her friends, he calculated upon an easy consent to his proposals on the score of necessity. He would take care to have it circulated through the country, that the elopement was voluntary, and who could contradict it? Her aunt would sanction the report, and who would disbelieve it? Her happiness, her respectability, were at stake! As she acceded to the proposal of Godfrey, tears of bitter anguish bedewed her cheeks, and her assent was scarcely audible through her sobs. Godfrey was much affected, and stood by in respectful and sympathising observance. The sun, however, was just declining on the horizon. Remembering that he had much to do, he bade her farewell, emphatically reminding her, as

he went, " that she must not fail to be at the same spot before the star of morning had faded from the heavens."

Rachel pursued her solitary way back to the house. As it would require time, however, before she could regain her composure, she resolved to make a circuit of the park, and visit all her favourite haunts before she bid them farewell, perhaps for ever! Not only from puerile recollections, but likewise from her keen relish of the beauties of nature, she felt uncommonly attached to Hurstwood and its environs, and could she have had the wish of her heart, it would have been never to quit them. There was scarcely a cool and sheltered fountain, a secluded grot, an opening lawn, or a lengthened vista, without its place in the history of her childhood, and without a peculiar share of interest from the awakening sensations and increasing sorrows of her ripening years. It was amid these venerable groves, that she had frequently

sought and found that peace which the mistress of the mansion drove from its walls; and it was by the grassy margin of this bubbling fountain, that she had sometimes indulged in a tear to the memory of her departed parent, and all that she had lost when torn by the stern tyrant from his paternal embrace.

Dear, very dear, is the remembrance of passed sorrows! Hallowed is the spot where affliction has poured forth its sighs and its tears, amid the silence of surrounding solitude. O yes!—it is truly precious in the recollections of future years!—Rachel loved all her favourite haunts. The ancient avenue, the woodman's cottage, with its blue smoke curling over the sheltering trees, the flower garden with its neglected parterres, where yet lingered many a remnant of former taste—the winding mazes of the wilderness, the prattling trout stream, that cooled its recesses, now leaping over a rude cascade, now reflecting on its un-

wrinkled surface, the simple structure of some rural bridge — all these were dear to her — each had its tale, each its alternate fascination, and as she went sorrowfully along, each had its tribute of unaffected and tender regret.

Hurstwood was, indeed, a place peculiarly calculated to attract and retain the imagination. Art and nature, fertility and wildness, all combined to make it delightful. It was universally allowed to exceed in situation any other place in that part of the country, and the taste and opulence of the family whose residence it had been for ages, had not been sparing in displaying their appreciation of its numberless advantages. No wonder then, that Rachel felt a something amounting to absolute grief, in deserting its fostering shades. Under the brightest of auspices she would have experienced sensations of regret, but now — under circumstances so appalling — so atrocious — with prospects so doubtful

and forlorn — she felt most acutely in leaving this haven, in which she had been so long sheltered, and committing herself, almost without guide or protector, to the mercy of a very worthless and merciless world.

For the conduct of her aunt, except in the present affair; — persecuting, fretful, absurd, and tyrannical as it had ever been, her troubled fancy was now inclined to make even unreasonable allowances. Her humbled spirit, her aching heart, almost tempted her to accuse herself as the cause of many of the inconveniences to which she had been subject. Perhaps she had been sometimes too little conciliating — perhaps she had arrogated too much to herself — she might have been negligent, inattentive? O yes! her aunt was her dear father's sister — she could not, therefore, show her too much regard, and she might not always have recollected this.

An amiable heart, in regretting the ill

usage of others, will often search into itself and look for the cause at home. Rachel, in doing this, allowed her feelings of present depression to gloss over some things, and exculpate others, which reason, under different circumstances, would never have authorized. Towards Lady Anna she had been but too conciliating, too attentive, too obedient. No delicacy of feeling resided in that proud heart, which never cared to crush the willow that bent before her. Had Rachel, on arriving at that age in which she might venture to exert her own judgment, appealed from the tyranny of her aunt to the generosity and kindness of her uncle, whatever might have been the result as far as he was concerned, it would have intimidated Lady Anna, and ensured a greater portion of respect and independence. But Rachel had a gentle spirit, and a heart so averse to wounding the feelings of others, that she preferred the pains of endurance to the more boister-

ous inquietudes of contention and complaint. Fate, however, now urged her forwards. Endurance was a crime — opposition a duty. Unwillingly did she yield to necessity, but her principles of propriety at once aided and consoled her.

On reaching the house, full of sad and melancholy feelings, Rachel enquired of the housekeeper, who admitted her, whether her aunt was in her own apartment, and being answered in the negative, and that she was out in the grounds, wondered at an event so unusual. Having told Ruth her intention of leaving the next morning, and requesting that she would come to her room for the purpose of making the requisite preparations as soon as Lady Anna was settled for the night, she made a little tour of the various apartments, splendid entertaining rooms, and long galleries of the mansion, which she was on the eve of deserting, after a residence of so un-

broken a duration. Now, had every massive piece of antique furniture, every wainscotting of dark oak, every burnished floor, every tapestried wall, and every painting and fantastic ornament, its peculiar interest; and she could almost fancy, as she contemplated the grim aspects of some of the former warriors and starched dames of the noble race of Hurstwood, that they frowned upon her for her sudden desertion.

At length she reached the hall. The shades of evening had enveloped every object with its dusky mantle. The spacious area, and the lofty roof which had once shone with the blaze of a thousand lights, were now rendered even more obscure by the partial glimmering of a single lamp, rudely fixed to the branches of a richly gilded sconce. The stag's horns, the antique beavers, the burnished cuirasses, the tattered banners, and the full length portraits, with which, in all the display of ancestrel pride, the place

was ornamented, were scarcely distinguishable through the gloom. At one end a deep oriel window, looking to the west, received the last tint of the evening sky on its panes of deeply stained glass; but this soon vanished, and a few twinkling stars shewed themselves through an open casement.

Rachel, fatigued alike with agitation and exertion, threw herself upon a seat near the lamp, and gave way to the pensive feelings which the place and the hour excited. She was sitting there then, perhaps, for the last time!—Other, and doubtless far different scenes awaited her! Her fancy rambled to the busy city—the noise of gaiety—the bustle of dissipation. But her's was not a mind to dwell long upon this. Unlike the generality of her sex, she had no aspirings after public distinction—no longings after conquest—no eagerness to mingle more with a world which her own observation and the experience of others had

convinced her could not bestow happiness. O that she had never been forced to quit her present retreat! Painfully did her reflections lead her to the probable result of her appeal to her uncle. It was a dreadful uncertainty!

She thought again upon Hurstwood — Kilbank — the Kirkbyes — De Ruse — the bridge of Barle — the conversation in the gallery of paintings on the morning of her return! How strange — how very strange every thing appeared! — What an alteration had a few weeks made, not merely in her prospects and feelings, but probably in the situation of the neighbourhood. Should Mr. Kirkbye die, there would be another mistress at Kilbank, who, however amiable, could never make up for the friendship of the present. Julius Pennington was on the point of losing his estate, and perhaps De Ruse — her new friend De Ruse — the exile — the traitor — the rebel — the outcast — perhaps *he* would possess the very man-

sion, and lord it in the very hall in which she at that moment sate! What inconceivable events did all mysterious time bring to pass!

She rose from her seat, and was about to leave the hall, when her eye suddenly encountered a painting, upon which the full light of the lamp shone unimpeded. She started—looked again—moved her position;—it was still the same—her eyes were not deceived—it must be the picture of De Ruse himself!—a thousand bewildering ideas crowded upon her imagination. It was singular that she had never before noticed the striking resemblance. The hair—the eyes—the forehead—bore a strict resemblance:—if in any thing the painting differed from the fancied original, it was in the style of the dress, and a certain stern expression about the mouth, of which De Ruse possessed nothing. Perhaps it was his father? She was determined to satisfy herself on this point. She knew not how

much she was herself interested in the subject. She was now convinced that her new friend *was* indeed the true heir of Hurstwood, and while gazing steadily upon the picture, her delighted fancy was the active auxiliary of her hopes.

But while thus employed, her simple bonnet thrown back, her glossy ringlets sportively wandering from the fillet which curbed their luxuriance, and her countenance lighted up with the pleasing emotions which this sudden discovery had produced, there was an eye that observed her with no ordinary interest — there was a heart near her that beat with admiration of her charms, and exulted in the prospect of their speedy possession. It was Julius Pennington.

By Lady Anna's direction, he had followed Rachel into the park, in hopes of thus forcing an interview which had been denied to his request. Scarcely had she parted with Godfrey, and struck off by another path, ere he arrived at the

same spot, and after some time spent in a fruitless search, concluding she was returned to the house, he pursued her thither, and entered the hall unnoticed, such was her exclusive attention to this new discovery. The gloom caused by the large dimensions of the place had further enabled him to approach unnoticed, and his delight in thus accomplishing his object was heightened by his being enabled to gaze upon her countenance and form, rendered even more interesting by the pale glare of the single lamp, without their being disturbed by those expressions and movements of disapprobation and aversion which he was quite conscious that he amply deserved.

But when he saw upon what object her eyes were rivetted, and when he found the cause why her countenance was so animated, and her attention so abstracted, indignation, jealousy, envy, and disappointment, at once rankled in his breast,

and it was not till some moments had elapsed, that he could enough recover his self-possession to address her in terms of moderation and courtesy. He remembered sufficient of his rival to comprehend the nature of Rachel's emotions, and nothing would now have composed him, but the certainty of her being entirely at his own disposal. The more he gazed, the more he gloried in his villany, and he thought that the attempt was warranted in his case, if it was only to deprive that person of his mistress, who was in a fair way to deprive him of his estate.

Fearful of alarming her too much by any abrupt address, he made a slight noise, and as Rachel turned with the intention of immediately retiring, he stepped up to her, and taking advantage of her surprize and consternation, seized her hand, and compelled her to resume the chair which she had before occupied. In vain did she attempt to escape. There

was more of mortification than of gentleness in his grasp, and at length she was terrified into acquiescence by considering that it might be dangerous further to provoke one who had already sufficiently shown the violence of his disposition.

"Miss Kemyss must pardon me this intrusion," said he, in an agitated tone, "when I remind her that our former terms of intimacy demanded milder treatment than I have experienced at her hands. Why Rachel — why do you so obstinately refuse even to see me? Is it so great an offence to love? May I not, after a friendship which commenced with our infancy, be allowed the common privilege of at least speaking my feelings? Am I to be denied those friendly assurances, that sympathy which is my due, even though my addresses are themselves denied? Rachel! beware of urging me too far! I have learnt to love you from the first dawn of opening reason to the present

moment. I have learnt to centre in you every thing that is adorable — every thing that is delightful — every thing that is desirable in this world! You must pardon me then, if I feel — if I act more violently than ordinary men; — if I cannot sit content to have feelings which are the growth of years torn rudely from my breast, and replaced by the excruciating pangs of unmerited disappointment!"

He paused. The lofty roof of the hall was filled with the deep tones of his voice, and he proceeded in a strain lower, but not less energetic.

"I were unworthy of you to feel — to say — to think less than I do. The shipwrecked mariner grasps at any straw in the hour of impending destruction. I too may be urged in the desperation of my feelings to attempt many rash things for the recovery of my shipwrecked hopes; — do not then glory too far in your obstinacy, but let reason have

her due portion of influence;—check present, and I trust momentary prejudice, and allow me to converse with you in those terms to which I have been so long accustomed."

Rachel listened in silence and dismay. The place in which they were, the gloom of surrounding objects, the lateness of the hour, the solitude that now remained unbroken, even the dim lamp which shed its quivering light upon the agitated, yet determined countenance and tall figure of Julius—all these, added to an address so sudden and unwelcome, had almost overwhelmed her. She felt, however, that necessity called upon her for the utmost exertion of her powers. A few hours more, and she would be out of the reach of this ungenerous persecution. It would be dangerous and imprudent to hurry Julius on to the immediate execution of his purpose—it would defeat her own. Yet she scorned to act the hypocrite, and procure her present libera-

tion by any concession which her future conduct could not ratify.

"You ask my friendship, Julius," said she, in a low and tremulous voice,—"you ask for a renewal of those feelings which formerly existed between us? Tell me, when did I withhold them? Never, till they were superseded on your part by more arbitrary affections—more unlimited demands than I was at all prepared to expect, or willing to allow. As a friend of my aunt's, and as the occasional companion of my own childhood, you were always received here with a welcome of which you have no right to complain. The same reception you would always have ensured, but for your own impatience and impetuosity. Though I am young, inexperienced, and perhaps foolish in my prejudices, yet you are too much of a man of the world to suppose that a female has not a right to use her own discretion in a matter of such importance as her future esta-

blishment. The claiming of this discretionary power is all of which you or my aunt can accuse me; and surely you will allow that it is no implied duty of friendship to condemn the ears to listen, when the heart is, if not averse, at least quite unprepared. Now what have been the recent evidences of *your* friendly feelings? Not only have you persecuted me with proposals direct and indirect, after promising to waive the subject for a given time, but you have indulged yourself and infected others with jealous alarms, and been the author of calumnies for which I could readily prove there has not been the slightest real foundation. Under these circumstances, Julius, can you expect from me the same proofs of esteem — the same pleasure in your society which formerly existed? No! If such was the case, you might justly despise me for pursuing a course of hypocrisy, which would be equally contemptible in your sight, as degrading to myself. O no! — Do me justice in this

particular at least, and if you have any wish to regain the place that you have lost, cease to persecute a friendless orphan. Show that you are really my friend, by consulting my happiness and regarding my feelings—by detracting from, rather than adding to the miseries of my situation—by inspiring me with confidence and gratitude, rather than with terror—by being my generous and disinterested protector, rather than a persecutor and inveterate enemy!"

Julius was not sufficiently callous to withstand this appeal altogether. He first relaxed, then relinquished, his grasp; the fiery expression of his eyes, softened into a gaze of admiration, and feeling the truth of the arguments used; he finally fixed them upon the ground, totally absorbed in listening to the melodious tones of the voice that addressed him. At the conclusion of Rachel's speech, he looked up. At the sight of her beauty, increased by her distress and confusion, a generous impulse seemed

for a moment to possess him. She invited him to be her friend, though she still rejected him as her lover. Was not friendship near akin to love? Perhaps he *had* been too precipitate — time and delicate attention might produce a favourable result — he would convince her of her influence — he would show her how devoted he could be to her wishes — it was not too late to regain her good opinion.

"Rachel," said he, respectfully taking her hand, but immediately relinquishing it, "your eloquence has prevailed. I own my error, and my happiness depends upon your pardon. I know that I have been guilty of unwarrantable presumption. My contrition shall be amply proved by my future conduct. The work of repentance shall begin now. Assure me of your forgiveness, and I will not longer detain you here. Alas! I know too well that you sigh to be liberated!"

The pardon was granted, but conditionally — "if you *prove* yourself my friend," — and Rachel, delighted with her emancipation, hurried with rapid steps to her own apartment. Arrived there, she sat down to think upon what had passed. It conveyed, however, no new sensations of pleasure or of hope. She well knew the character of Julius Pennington. It was impetuous in right or wrong. Like his talents, it was versatile and showy. Under the circumstances in which he was placed, she felt no dependence upon his sudden professions of repentance; — the next gust of passion — the next call of interest, would upset them all. She felt the dreadful conviction that her situation was just the same as before this interview, and she did not for a moment flatter herself that her eloquence had produced any further effects han the welcome liberation from his addresses which she now enjoyed.

CHAP. VI.

It had struck the hour of midnight, but Rachel had not retired to rest. She knew that it would be vain to woo the "honied-heavy dew of slumber," and therefore as soon as Ruth was dismissed, she seated herself at the window, and withdrawing the drapery, looked out upon the night. A young moon was just hiding itself behind a distant clump of trees. All nature was still, as if one universal sleep prevailed. No leaf moved — no breeze whispered — no distant lowing — no solitary bark broke the surrounding calm.

O, how different a scene to the tumultuous emotions which warred in her own breast! As the hour of her departure approached, a thousand doubts, fears, and anxieties, fluttered around her

beating heart. Like a poor hare almost hunted down, timid and irresolute, yet standing on the brink of a stream which it must pass or die, Rachel was distracted to find herself forced into a situation so contrary to her feelings, and so galling to her principles; and more than once she was on the point of giving up her attempt, and trusting her fate to the awakening reason of Lady Anna, and the generosity of Julius.

But alas! Lady Anna had no reason — Julius no generosity. *She*, who had once consented to sacrifice her niece so wantonly and so cruelly, could scarcely be supposed to possess principle enough to venture on a repentance; — and *he* could be entitled to no trust or confidence, who had so relentlessly pursued his benefactor and preserver, and regardless too, of the claims of a helpless female, had plotted her abduction and ruin!

Rachel watched and wept till she fancied, from a pale streak in the east, that

the hour of her flight was almost arrived. What were her emotions when, having arrayed herself in a simple dress, and tied up a few necessaries in a small bundle, she seized the handle of the door, and turned to bid adieu to that apartment in which had been spent so much, and perhaps the happiest part of her existence. Her heart sunk as, returning again and again, she looked into the dressing room, which she had converted into her library, and adorned with many little exertions of her own taste and fancy. There, ranged on shelves, were those very books with which Lord Norland had presented her when he had so abruptly visited Hurstwood. The sight gave her courage. He must have felt some interest, or he would never have troubled himself even with this slender token of regard. She passed on. With swimming eyes she lingered over every well-known article of furniture or decoration with which she had been so long

acquainted. Nothing, however trifling, escaped her tearful glances. Like a bird forced by the howling storms of the coming winter to desert her snug and self-formed nest, and roam in search of happier climes, so did Rachel linger till the deep tones of the large clock warned her to be gone. She reached the door, she closed it — overcome by her emotions, she once more returned, and sinking on her knees, "asked forgiveness of heaven for the rash step she was about to take, and implored the guidance and protection of that Omnipotent Being, without whose aid the cry of the innocent was unavailing, and without whose coercion the designs of the guilty were triumphant."

Calmed and soothed by this act of devotion, she hurried forth, but without daring again to trust a farewell glance. She found Ruth in the servant's hall. This provident housekeeper had completed her preparations for something

like a comfortable breakfast. But Rachel felt very little inclined either for refreshment or delay. She was anxious to commence her journey, in order that her fears and regrets might give way before the necessity of active exertion. We often feel more in the anticipation of any doubtful scheme than when we are fairly embarked in it. But Ruth would admit of no denial. "What, Miss Rachel — and up all night too! Not eat a morsel? Why to be sure if you mean to sink down by the way in a fit of fainting, and be brought back again to the old house, I have nothing to say to it, except that there has been plenty of trouble and uneasiness for little purpose."

Ruth's entreaties at length prevailed. Her young mistress, however, did not do quite all the justice to her preparations which which she had wished; but she was obliged to be contented, and all being now ready, they found themselves

in a few minutes actually pacing the green slope that led into the park.

"Well, to be sure," said the loquacious housekeeper, as she hobbled along," who would ever have thought a week back, that I should be tramping away at this hour of the morning — I, Miss Rachel, running away from my mistress, and you from your lover. Times are much altered to be sure. In my young days, I should — or any of us should — sooner behalf have thought of risking our necks out of a three-pair of stairs window to catch such a fine, smacking fellow as that young Pennington — than getting up of a raw cold morning to give him the slip. But times, as I was saying, are altered. And yet it 's an awful thing for old women to meddle with young women's hearts, as the song says,

There 's no use i' threeping,
When young maids are weeping; —
Their own hearts, I trow, — are in their own keeping.

Though Rachel's spirits could not keep pace with those of her companion, yet she was much rejoiced to find her so free from apprehension, and so careless of the doubtful consequences which might result from their expedition. The freshness of the morning air, however, was grateful to her throbbing pulses, and she brushed away the heavy dew-drops from the long grass, with a step so light and quick as to call forth frequent expostulations from the less agile Ruth.

After a walk of considerable length, they began to climb the short ascent which led to the place of meeting. Rachel's heart beat, her breath almost left her, and she stood for a moment, endeavouring to recover her composure. Already she began to find that she was unequal to go through with the task she had imposed upon herself, unless some unforeseen occurrence should brighten her hopes, and raise her drooping spirits. Every step that bore her further from

Hurstwood, seemed to throw her further from protection, and it required all the exertions of her reason to convince her to the contrary.

Ashamed, however, of these fluctuating emotions, she made another effort, and in a few moments found herself at the same spot where she had met Godfrey the day previous. She looked around — no one was visible. Almost did her heart feel eased at the disappointment. Was she then too late? — Her eyes looked involuntarily to the sky. There, with a clear and radiant light, shone the star of the morning, walking still bright through the unclouded heavens, though the thousands by which she had been attended had all yielded to the opening dawn.

Already was her mind fraught with images of dismay and anxious foreboding, when, from behind the thick shelter of some thorns, which grew a short distance below the spot on which

she now stood, a figure suddenly advanced a few paces, and motioned her hastily from the hill. A second glance convinced her that it was Godfrey. She descended, and found him occupied in preparing two horses of the small mountain breed, for immediately setting out.

"I am obliged to you, lady," said he, after respectfully and modestly returning the morning salutation, "for your almost unexpected punctuality. I forgot to mention yesterday, that it would have been better for us to have avoided even the sight of the ferry-house, as old Peter, who lives there, is, as you may observe by the smoke above the trees, an early riser; and besides, he has been for some time in young Mr. Pennington's pay; and it was at this very place in consequence, that Mr. De Ruse had nearly been taken only the other night."

"Then he is quite safe?" enquired Rachel, with an animation of features which did not fail to strike Godfrey. "Alas! I was

afraid from what my aunt, Lady Anna, told me, that he was, or at least was likely to be, soon in the hands of his enemies. After his kind interest in my welfare, I should be ungrateful indeed, not to receive pleasure from the consciousness of his security."

She blushed at the warmth which had required this apology; yet anxiously did she await the answer, which she hoped would convey that information which of late she had so frequently wished for. "Mr. De Ruse, or to call him by his proper name, Mr. Hurstwood," replied Godfrey, "is, I hope, — nay I am sure, — in perfect safety. Never was an escape managed with better judgment or cooler courage than his. I cannot tell which to admire most, his heart or his head. Well may this country rejoice, the day that he is restored to his possessions."

Grateful as this encomium was to the feelings of Rachel, she yet desired to know more of the fugitive, and this her

looks and her silence plainly manifested. Godfrey seemed as if wishful to comply, but looking significantly towards Ruth, who after much puffing and blowing had at length reached the party, he proceeded, without farther parley, to complete the arrangement of the horse gear, which, considering the period, and the remoteness of the country, could not be supposed to be the most complete or perfect.

"But whither are we going? what plan have you formed? when and how soon shall we meet the conveyance?" were questions which quickly succeeded each other, when all being ready, Godfrey proposed to assist his companions in mounting their steeds.

"My plan is, lady," replied Godfrey, "to take off to the left, and avoiding the ford, to keep this side of the river, till some few miles further up it becomes shallow enough in places to ride through with safety. We may then strike into

Byewood forest. ·I know every turning and winding, and I hope that in good tim in the evening we shall reach the village on the outskirts, through which the London conveyance regularly passes. If we can accomplish this, I have no doubt of your safe arrival at your destination; for "the Fly" from St. Marions, stops before it reaches Byewood, and therefore, if you are traced by it, they will of course be deceived, and imagine that you have taken some other route."

Rachel was perfectly satisfied with this arrangement, but not so the housekeeper.

"I can tell you one thing, young Mr. Jackanapes," said she, wagging her head significantly and somewhat angrily, "I cannot say that I know exactly who you are; but I am sure I can well guess what you are. You are either a fool or a knave, for nobody but one or the other would trust their bodies and souls in Byewood

forest. You may thank your stars, Miss Rachel," continued she, turning to her young mistress, "that I came along with you, for as sure as you put your head into that dismal place, this man will either murder you himself, or he will put you in a fair way of being murdered by somebody else. I have not lived five and fifty years in this country not to know, that never man, woman, or child that went into Byewood, ever came out of it again safe and sound in head and limb. So; you may do as you like, Miss Rachel, but I dare not go."

At this extraordinary and unexpected demur Rachel stood silent, looking at Godfrey to observe what effect it had upon him. An expression of anger and haughty impatience crossed his countenance, and once his lips moved as if he was going to vent his feelings without reserve. He had accustomed himself, however, to self-command; and one thought upon his friend Hurstwood, and

one look at the lovely fugitive who had thus claimed his protection, caused the smile of complacence again to resume its station.

"Pardon me, Miss Kemyss," said he, "if I venture, unbidden, to check this good lady in her assertions and insinuations. As to Byewood forest, I own it is and has been for ages an object of terror and avoidance to the ignorant and superstitious; but as to any injury received there by those who venture within its precincts, I not only of late years never heard of any, but having myself frequently wandered alone through its deepest recesses, I can give my word that nothing shocking ever happened to me. It was in former times the scene of much violence and bloodshed, and the proprietor is not unwilling, for the sake of his game, that the old prejudices against it should be carefully fostered. The plan I have proposed seems to me the only feasible one in your situation; but if

you sympathize with your companion in her fears, I can only say, that I am ready to serve you in any other way which you may think proper to suggest."

Rachel had lived too much in the country, and known too much of the hereditary superstitions and absurd prejudices of the lower orders, not to be re-assured by Godfrey's explanation, and when again she considered him as the friend of Mr. Hurstwood, her doubts entirely vanished, and she set about the difficult task of composing the fears of her companion.

At first, however, Ruth was neither to be soothed by flattery, nor re-assured by promises; and it was not till she saw the tears stand in the eyes of her mistress that she was induced to relax her obstinacy.

"Well — well, Miss Rachel," said she, "sooner than see you cry, and be the cause of your giving up this off-hand journey, since you think it must be done

— it must; — and so here's an end of my talking. Old heads in my day used to guide young ones — but now it is the other way on. Not that I mean to say but what you see clearer than me. Trying is knowing, and so whatever happens, I am in no blame. I am not over-fond of these raffling young fellows myself. They are always getting themselves into scrapes, and so it is like they will do their company. If the blind lead the blind — but I'll say no more. If we get safe through, at any rate it will be something to talk off."

Ruth talked in this strain till she was fairly mounted, and then her fears for some time got the better of her loquacity, for she was no horsewoman, though in those days it was the chief mode of conveyance for young and for old.

For several miles the party cautiously threaded the mazes of Hurstwood chace, avoiding as well as they could the open places, and the various lodges of the

keepers, fearing to be observed or questioned. The sun had not advanced far on his course when they entered upon a flat and fertile district, bounded towards the east by a rocky and gloomy ridge, which Rachel found on enquiry to be the dreaded forest of Byewood. On the confines of this they halted about noon. It was in a cool and pleasant dell, in the midst of which towered a grey rock — its sides tufted with the heath and harebell, and its summit crowned with the graceful branches of the mountain ash. From the base of this issued a clear and plentiful spring, which, after struggling through a few mossy fragments, fell into a natural basin of some depth, and was afterwards lost amid a wilderness of rank vegetation and luxuriant underwood.

The season of spring was now far advanced, and the day had been unusually warm. The drowsy flight of the beetle — the busy hum of the woodland bee, and the swarms of flies, eager to

catch the influence of each sun beam which could win its way through the green covert of opening leaves, were evidences of the approach of an early summer. It had begun to be even oppressively hot, and the party, on reaching the edge of the forest, were all glad of the prospect of an hour's repose.

Notwithstanding the extreme awkwardness of her situation, and the many doubtful feelings which occasionally forced themselves upon her attention, Rachel, as they proceeded, was not totally insensible to the romantic character of the country through which they travelled. Fond of legendary lore, she listened some times to the relations of Godfrey, who walked along side her horse, till she was beguiled for a moment from the remembrance of her sorrows, and gave much of her attention and interest to the contemplation of objects which were celebrated either for their beauty or their eccentricity, or rendered famous by the

busy and marvellous tongue of tradition. The shattered cross — the solitary barrow — the ruined tower — the mountain pass — all in their turn afforded matter of discourse, which Godfrey, mindful of the importance of dissipating useless apprehensions, did not fail to improve, and Rachel could not refrain from expressing her surprize at the facility with which half their journey had been accomplished.

Having tethered the horses at a place hard by, where they might find abundance of herbage, Godfrey was busily employed in arranging the contents of a small basket which he had carried in his hand, when he was stopped by the officious house-keeper, who told him that "if he had got refreshment there, he might spare himself the trouble of bringing it out, as she had not left the Hall empty-handed."

Godfrey, however, persisted, smiling as he assured her that "he was not un-

willing to contest the honour of having best provided for the occasion. His mother had stored his little basket, and though it came from a very humble cottage, he had no doubt it would give equal satisfaction with the produce of the palace." A very nice game pasty and a bottle of excellent canary being produced, decided the matter, and Ruth was glad to thrust her dried mutton sandwiches and scanty allowance of small beer into the large bundle which had graced one side of her pad.

So anxious was Rachel to conclude her journey before sun-set, that as soon as the repast of which she forced herself to partake was concluded, she proposed to Godfrey to move forwards. He readily assented, but on looking round for the horses, he found that one of them had broken loose, and altogether disappeared. Recommending his companions to remain where they were, and not to be alarmed should he be absent for some

time, he immediately commenced his pursuit, and climbing the almost perpendicular bank of the glen, was soon out of sight. Ruth meanwhile having very much enjoyed the liberal potations with which the gallantry as well as policy of Godfrey had supplied her, began to feel the soporific effects of a liquid stronger than any she had heretofore been accustomed to use, and accordingly, after having rendered a due compliment to the "genteelness" of their young guide, and apologized for her weariness under the plea of "having seen three generations, and therefore retaining only a third part of the strength of her youth," she carefully took off her bonnet, fastened it upon a hazel bush hard by, and replacing it with a stout kerchief tied under her chin, was soon fast asleep, regardless of all the ghosts, goblins, witches, or robbers, that were said to infest the gloomy solitudes of Byewood forest.

Rachel, left thus almost alone, feeling

but little inclined to slumber, seated herself on a fragment of rock, close to the bubbling fountain, and regarded its limpid waters, as they stole towards the basin, with a still and pensive gaze. The soft murmur of the streamlet, its refreshing coolness, and its crystal clearness, had an indescribable and composing effect upon her thoughts; and her reveries glancing towards a flattering future were far from unpleasing.

From this scene of tranquillity and repose she was, however, soon aroused by the sudden approach of a panting and exhausted deer, followed by a few couples of dogs equally wearied with the pursuit. With a desperate rush they all darted through the brake, and were now scarcely a stone's-cast from the place where Rachel sat. The poor victim, to use the phraseology of the day, ran stiff, high, and lompering. His mouth was black and dry, his tongue hung out, and he hit his dew-claws upon the ground, having

scarcely strength enough to leap the narrow streamlet which now opposed his progress. He did not attempt to proceed further; but placing his broad haunches against a neighbouring thicket, seemed disposed to take desperate vengeance upon his pursuers, should they venture to approach.

Not many seconds had elapsed ere a keeper, clad in the characteristic dress of his office, was seen leading his jaded steed down the bank, and after some clambering he succeded in posting himself opposite to the enraged animal. Scarcely was the usual cry of "*ware haunch*," and the coupling of the dogs performed, before a gentleman, gaily apparelled and excellently mounted, gallopped from an opposite direction, and seeing the situation of the game, disengaged a light fowling-piece from his saddle-bow, and with a deliberate aim lodged its contents in the head of his noble victim.

The deer fell, and the keeper, immediately running in, secured his legs, and sounded the mort upon the horn that graced his side. This done, the gentleman approached alone; for there appeared to be no other company, and refusing the dagger, which, according to the usual etiquette, the keeper offered him for the purpose of "*taking say*," he threw the rein upon his horse's neck, and looking around for a fit place to quench his thirst, approached the fountain where Rachel, in great dismay, and doubtful how to act, awaited his approach.

Whether his mind was pre-occupied, or some impending foliage partly hid her figure from his view, Rachel did not feel inclined to enquire; for all her attention was now directed to the peculiarity of his appearance. His countenance was not handsome, nor particularly prepossessing. He had manifestly outlived the vigour of youth, though enough yet remained to show that it had been con-

siderable. His countenance displayed marks of intelligence and deep reflection, but there was a something rather disagreeably commanding and independent in his expression and manner. His costume, too, was more indicative of pride and ostentation than suited either his age or the period in which he lived. His doublet was of deep crimson velvet, embroidered with gold. His boots reached above his knees. His spurs were gilt, and had large and polished rowels. His sword girdle was of black velvet, fastened with buckles of gold richly embossed. Even the equipments of his steed were in the same costly style, and would be, in the estimation of a more modern sportsman, perhaps little suited to the rough and dangerous nature of his pursuits.

He carried that, however, about his air which convinced the observer that to him neither war nor hunting was mere child's play, or undertaken for the sole

purposes of ostentation, as a boy struts with his drum and his paper helmet.

He approached, and with an air of abstraction went to the stream which bubbled before him, as if inviting his attention. Rachel, full of alarm at being caught in so lonely a spot, and under circumstances, too, so equivocal, now attempted to retreat; but it was vain: the noise she made caused him to look sharply around, and as his dark and piercing eyes met her's, she felt as if rivetted to the spot by their influence.

After the first quick glance and start of surprize, he stood for some seconds calmly, but keenly, regarding her, till at length, as if thinking himself guilty of a breach of the rules of gallantry and politeness, he uncovered the grey locks that were now thinly scattered over his high and intelligent forehead, and begged to assure her that his rude interruption of her retirement was purely unintentional.

"If you command me, madam," said

he, "I will withdraw, and seek to quench my thirst where I may be less intrusive."

Rachel did not know what to answer, though she would have given worlds to escape any prolongation of the interview. Judging by her silence, and her still retaining her position, that she had no decided objection to his presence, the stranger, again covering his head and folding his arms in a careless attitude, thus spoke:—

"I have been, for many years, accustomed to frequent these solitudes, either as a sportsman, or one who wooed contemplation in her farthest recesses; but never till now, lady, was I blessed with so fair a vision. Could I bring my mind to yield to the superstitions of my country, I might now go away and tell to my wondering hearers, that I had caught the timid Naiad weeping by the mossy brink of her own fountain, or that Psyche herself, jealous of her arch and youthful lover, had sought these shades,

at once to bewail and punish his perfidy. But as I look upon this earth as holding out no temptation for the residence of such etherial beings, I will transgress politeness so far as to venture to conceive you mortal, and as such, certainly most marvellously situated here. Surely, lady, you must have been beguiled hither by some evil genius, — some Comus, whose delight it is to bewilder and entrap the beautiful and the innocent; for it is beyond my comprehension what motive, either of pleasure or expediency, could have brought one so lovely and so young to a place, into which even the stoutest hearted are not often willing to venture alone."

Rachel was strangely embarrassed at this adventure; yet thinking it necessary to reply to the address of the stranger, she briefly assured him that " necessity, not choice, had brought her there. Her companions were near, and in a few minutes she hoped to resume her journey."

The gentleman gazed at her in silence, but his thoughts appeared active.

"I may be taking a liberty," said he, at length; "but before I quit you, lady, allow me to say, that if your journey has nothing clandestine in it — nothing that you wish to conceal from the eyes of men, your companions are misleading you. If, on the contrary, one so young, so superior in birth and attainments, as in spite of your disguise you appear to be — if you are here with any sinister view, your journey, if I may judge by its commencement, is likely to punish your imprudence. But I am transgressing: I am old and morose. A gay lady has no ear for an old man's warning. — Adieu!"

With a slow and erect gait he returned to the place where the keeper was busily employed in securing the game, by strapping it across the back of his horse. Without looking round, or taking any

further notice of Rachel, the stranger mounted his steed, and ordering the man to follow him with the dogs, they rode slowly away, and were soon lost amid the thickness of the surrounding foliage.

CHAP. VII.

Rachel, though by no means rendered more comfortable by this parting and extraordinary address of the stranger, yet almost experienced a degree of regret when she saw him depart in an opposite direction to the one which she herself was likely to pursue. When forced by circumstances which we cannot controul to descend from that height in which fortune has placed us, and stoop to a society with which we can have no communion of sentiment, and condescend to a course of action which former habits equally with our reason disapprove in the abstract, we not unfrequently experience a series of sensations mixed up of pleasure and pain, when worthier associates and nobler examples cross our path.

Rachel felt all this, and the half-warning, half-reproving voice of the stranger, at once roused her fears and unsettled her resolutions.

Again she thought over all that had passed. Her scruples with regard to the mode of proceeding which she had adopted returned with redoubled force; but when they were dispassionately balanced against the evils by which she had been threatened, she was obliged to confess that it was not in her power to have acted differently, unless she had chosen to sacrifice her happiness on the shrine of a criminal timidity.

Scarcely had she come to this conclusion ere she perceived Godfrey returning from a successful pursuit of the stray horse. On approaching her, he made many apologies for the seeming unnecessary length of his absence, assuring her that he had concealed himself in a thicket hard by, hoping that the party might

altogether escape the observation of the strangers. He appeared sorry when Rachel informed him of her interview with the gentleman, and after listening eagerly to a description of his person, he assured her that he could throw no light upon the subject.

"Yet," said he, musing, "it is strange that I should be ignorant of one, who, by his own confession, is in the constant habit of frequenting these wilds. His dress, too, is so uncommon, that, if I had once seen, I could scarcely forget him. He must be a person of consequence in these parts, and yet I know of no one who answers the description. It is very singular; but it is useless to waste our time in conjectures: we must hasten onwards, or the night will overtake us."

Ruth, who had awoke much refreshed by her slumber, seconded this proposition heartily, and, having mounted with

all expedition, the party soon found themselves on the summit of an eminence which overlooked the glen on one side. For some time a thick haze seemed to envelope the earth, but now it began to disappear. Dark and stationary clouds, — terrific in appearance — gigantic in their proportions, and rolled one upon another in awful uniformity, now occupied the heavens, and almost excluded the light of the sun. A portentous calm overspread all nature. The birds shrunk to their retreats, as if it were night, — the beasts sought the shelter of the sheds, — and the affrighted party looked at each other as if enquiring what this solemn and sublime scene could portend.

Rachel's enquiring eye endeavoured to read, in the countenance of Godfrey, symptoms of that alarm which now began violently to agitate her own bosom; but she saw him collected, though serious, and after a passing glance at his com-

panions, and a steady gaze upon the sky, he again urged them to use all the expedition in their power.

Fully convinced that the prophecy of the stranger was now about to have its completion, the tears filled Rachel's eyes, and her resolution began almost to fail her, while the extreme wildness of the scenery, which now began to encompass them, added no little to her dreadful forebodings. Here, rocks piled upon rocks, in hideous confusion, seemed almost to threaten their destruction by an instant downfal, — there, a shelving mountain, destitute of herbage, naked and dreary, opposed their progress. Here a torrent, dark and angry, rushed through its deep and rocky bed,—there, a melancholy grove of pines threw their gloomy shade athwart the valley, while the road, generally following the course of some brawling stream, sometimes degenerating into a mere torrent bed, and sometimes contracted into the narrow verge of a

sheep-track, required all their dexterity and presence of mind to thread with safety and dispatch.

But all their dispatch could not secure them from the dreaded effects of the impending storm. The heavens appeared to have reserved all their fury for one awful moment—for one general burst. Already had the mountain ash begun to bend its fragile form athwart the road, and the more sturdy branches of the oak to shake their bursting foliage, as if in dread anticipation, when, at once, the clouds opened their bosoms, charged with destruction, and poured all their fury upon the yielding earth. In a moment our travellers were completely drenched. Though so early in the year, vivid flashes of lightning darted from cloud to cloud;—the tempest swept in violent gusts through the narrow ravines and confined vallies, and the little rivulets, that before scarcely forced their way through the opposing herbage, now

rushed from the hills with all the noise and impetuosity of mountain torrents.

The poor housekeeper, divested of all presence of mind in this emergency, was thrown from her seat, and lay upon the earth as if stunned by her fall. Godfrey caught the rein which Rachel held, just as her steed was about to run wild with terror; and, after assisting her to dismount, he looked around anxiously for some sheltering nook, where they might retire till the storm was overpast.

Rachel's feelings at this moment were dreadful. She felt as if heaven was thus punishing her imprudence; and she almost wished, as the warning of the stranger again forced itself on her recollection, that she had returned to Hurstwood, and braved the dangers by which she had been there encompassed.

They had not proceeded far, Godfrey pioneering the way, before they found that the path which they were now pursuing was completely inundated where it

reached the low ground, and that to attempt to proceed in that direction would be little short of madness. Danger is full of expedients. Without even a pause, Godfrey returned to the place where the poor housekeeper lay, and after raising her, and discovering that she was more frightened than really hurt, he proposed that they should leave the road, and endeavour to secure a shelter higher amongst the rocks, which at this moment towered sublimely above them. Fastening the affrighted steeds to a tree, he again led the way; but, after forcing a difficult passage, through the underwood, for about a hundred yards, Ruth protested that she could go no further, and Rachel, almost equally fatigued and uncomfortable, thought they had better return to the road, and patiently await the conclusion of the storm.

Godfrey very unwillingly acceded to this proposition; for he argued, that if they persevered in climbing the ascent,

it would bring them out upon another path, which led as directly to the place of their destination as the one which they were now pursuing. But Ruth still protested her inability, seconding her complaints with many tears and reproaches, that she had ever been led into this abode of devils and witches.

Placing themselves, therefore, under a high bank, for they were afraid to trust the shelter of the trees, they awaited, in silent awe and trembling astonishment, the clearing off of this sublime burst of the angry elements. Rachel, who, notwithstanding the gentleness of her disposition, yet was endowed with a more than common share of presence of mind, when circumstances called it forth, stood, supporting her beautiful figure, to which her dripping clothes now closely adhered, against the projecting edge of a grey rock. Her eyes were timidly fixed upon the heavens, but in her countenance was visible a

spirit of resignation and patience which might have graced an angel. Godfrey stood apart, careless of any shelter, and looking out upon the clouds, as if he defied their vengeance. He rested upon the pole which he carried, and displayed in his manner many symptoms of restlessness and impatience. Meanwhile, poor Ruth crouched beneath the bank, where it partially inclined to the road; and as every flash of lightning and rolling peal of thunder were forced upon her senses, she uttered a piercing shriek, and covered her face with her hands.

The duration of a tempest is frequently in proportion to its violence, and so luckily our party found it. Scarcely half an hour had elapsed from its commencement, ere the clouds began to break and disperse; and they had not remounted their horses many minutes, when a deep blue sky was visible in places, and a single gleam of the sun again burst upon the drooping earth.

After many difficulties were encountered in crossing the inundated parts of the road, they at length emerged from the rocky district of the forest, and pursued their way over a more open but still wild and desolate country, presenting nothing but a succession of heaths and dangerous morasses.

Godfrey, still attending their course on foot, and rendering every attention and civility in his power, continually comforted them by describing the shortness of the distance which now divided them from their destination; and at length, on their attaining a gentle eminence, he pointed out a clump of trees, seen indistinctly through the closing shades of evening, which, as he asserted, sheltered the very house at which the proposed conveyance was to stop.

Night had commenced when the party arrived at the house of entertainment, perhaps still known by the sign of "the Otter;" that extraordinary animal de-

lighting much in the well-stocked streams and rivulets of the west country. Rachel and her companion were received with all due attention and sympathy by the landlady, while Godfrey, assuring them that they would now be safe, and persisting in his intention of departing immediately for fear of exciting suspicion, took a respectful leave, desiring that Rachel would inform him, if in any respect he could be of further use to her. In vain was a pecuniary remuneration pressed upon him for his services, which, though she could but ill spare from her scanty store, Rachel had pre-determined that he should accept. He turned round somewhat haughtily, and without staying even to listen to her thanks, he vaulted upon one of the horses, and was soon lost amid the surrounding darkness.

Thus, thrown entirely upon her own prudence and resources, Rachel experienced all that forlornness of feeling which is natural in situations like her's. She was soon, however, aroused from

reflection by the sharp and elevated tone of the landlady, who, half in joke and half serious, began to upbraid her for standing in the draught of the door with her wet clothes on. "It had been the death of many a soul, both male and female; and as long as she was mistress of "the Otter," she would take care that her guests took care of themselves. If the hinny got cold and was laid on her back with a fever, all the country would cry out, that she had slept in a damp bed at "the Otter."

Rachel thanked the hostess for her friendly concern, and asked at what hour the conveyance for London would take her up. "For London?" repeated Mrs. Pritchard, looking steadily at her guest. "You seem but ill prepared for so long a journey. And is that elderly woman going with you? You'll want two places. Where are you come from? Westward, of course. Going eastward then to be sure. It is an awkward time for

London passengers to get in all dripping with rain,—not a dry thread on their backs, nor yet in their bundles. Let me see. The clock has just struck nine. You must start at three precisely. So—you will have just six hours to eat your suppers, dry your clothes, and take your sleep. Little enough in all conscience. But we must do all we can for you, and hope you will make better customers the next time."

Mrs. Pritchard bustled off to see what could be done, and all was at length so comfortably arranged, that in the course of another hour Rachel was in the enjoyment of peaceful slumbers, after the uncommon hurry and fatigue of the day.

The world was still enveloped in darkness, and heavy rain was pattering against the windows, when a low rap and a gentle shake of the door caused our fair fugitive to rise from her bed and enquire the hour. "The clock has struck two, ma'am, and my mistress desired I

would call you and help you to dress," replied a soft and whispering voice. Rachel admitted the girl, who brought light, and the clothes which had been so completely drenched. "I have never been to bed ma'am, — mistress thought you had better go comfortable; for she says it is a long journey, and you are without luggage, and your woman servant has slept ever since she got her supper. So I did my best, but would have done better if I had had more time. I dare say you are very tired, ma'am; but they wait for nobody these drivers, and I expect them here every minute."

To her questions concerning the housekeeper, Rachel received little or no answer, and the girl seemed to insinuate that there was no use in disturbing her, as in all probability there would not be room for her among the other passengers. "And you know, ma'am, she can follow you by the waggon, which leaves

here at six, and gets into London only two days later."

Rachel, alarmed at the idea of undertaking so long a journey alone, without any comment took the candle from the maid's hand, and desired to be shown immediately to the room in which her servant slept. After several demurs, she succeeded in finding Ruth, who was buried in a sound sleep. She instantly awoke her, and sending the maid for another light, desired her to rise immediately, and as soon as possible to join her in the little parlour below. Thither she now proceeded, and for the first time since the commencement of her journey, partook cheerfully of the comfortable meal which Mrs. Pritchard's care had caused to be provided for her.

At length the clock struck three, and all being ready, Rachel was not sorry when the girl came to inform her that the conveyance was at the door, and as no passengers were going forwards, she

and her servant would have the whole vehicle to themselves.

Rachel thought herself supremely fortunate in so unusual an occurrence. On arriving at the door, an almost pitchy darkness concealed all external objects from her view, and the rain was so violent and the wind so loud, that she was glad to take possession of her seat with all the expedition possible. The door was closed, and they drove off at a rapid pace.

They had travelled many miles ere the dawn began to display faintly the objects around them. Rachel let down the window, sensible of some difference in the motion of the carriage, and perceived, with no little terror and surprize, that they were crossing a broad stream on a rudely constructed rafter of large planks. Unwilling to create any disturbance in so critical a situation, she forbore any remark till landing on the opposite bank, a man came to the door

and enquired respectfully, "If the lady would like to alight while the horses were changing."

She acquiesced in the proposal, and was received in a small cottage by the water side, though the swinging sign of a comfortable inn was distinctly to be seen at a short distance. To her enquiries, the man answered that it was yet early; and that it was not usual for the passengers to stop at the ferry, as the driver had merely to change his horses, and make the best of his way forwards. After a little sparring between the housekeeper and the man, concerning the expediency of a breakfast, of which no signs appeared, they resumed their places in the vehicle, and pursued their journey with rapidity. As they proceeded, the vallies were rich and well cultivated, and many of the eminences clothed with wood. Now and then, through the openings of the hills, a broad expanse of water was visible,

though, owing to the haziness of the atmosphere, Rachel could not decide whether it was a lake, an estuary, or the open sea.

They travelled thus till the sun had nearly attained his meridian, only stopping twice to change their horses. At length the scene changed. They climbed a lofty range of bleak hills, and after traversing a heath for several miles, descended into a sequestered valley, ornamented with dark and venerable woods, and rendered almost inaccessible on one side by a lofty and abrupt chain of overhanging rocks.

The sun had retreated behind an impenetrable mass of threatening clouds, as they commenced their descent into this gloomy vale. The sombre hue of every surrounding object struck a chill to the heart of our travellers, and Ruth more than once declared, that they must be entering again upon the dreaded precincts of Byewood forest. Though Ra-

chel pretended to laugh at the absurdity of this conjecture, yet she felt her spirits overawed, as the vehicle, leaving the road they had hitherto pursued, was dragged with difficulty through grassy avenues aud gloomy groves, whose gigantic branches stretched across the way, and almost seemed to oppose their further progress.

As they proceeded, the woods thickened, and Rachel began to fear that ere long the light of the sun would be altogether excluded, when, on turning the base of a rock that towered proudly over the extremity of the vale, the ocean burst upon her view, and she beheld before her the ivied walls of a building, looking from a bold headland upon the deep, and washed on one side by the impetuous and restless surge.

She now begun to be really alarmed. She knew too much of the geography of her country, to suppose that the road to the metropolis from the part which she in-

habited traversed the sea coast, and the conjectures which had partly obtruded themselves at the ferry now became certainty to her mind. She had no opportunity, however, of acting as her feelings prompted, for the carriage was already at the gate, and a man and woman were in attendance there to receive them.

The person whom she had before addressed, now opened the door, and requested them to alight. Rachel, who had caught a glimpse of the dark and gloomy interior into which she was invited, attempted to assume an air of carelessness which she in no wise felt, and stated her determination of remaining where she was till it was time to move on. "You must wait some time then, lady," replied the man with great sang froid; "for if the truth must be told, we are going no further."

"No further!" cried Rachel, shocked beyond measure at the reality of her conjectures. "Did not we take our places

for London? Why then are we brought here? This is not London!"

"Perhaps not," replied the man in the same tone. "You must be contented however, to fancy it London, and I dare say it will do quite as well. But the good man and woman there are waiting, and it is time we should be back again. You must get out, lady." At this answer Rachel turned as pale as death. A cold tremor ran through her whole frame, and she would undoubtedly have fallen, had not Ruth caught her in her arms. The man, taking advantage of her helpless state, hurried her and the housekeeper out of the vehicle, and delivering them into the charge of those who stood at the gate, mounted the box with the driver, and with a sarcastic "good-day ladies," ordered him to drive off.

In a few minutes the carriage was out of sight. Rachel, overcome with the violence of her emotions in finding herself thus left, fainted away, and it was

not for several hours that she was sufficiently recovered to enquire further into the nature of her dreadful situation. The poor housekeeper, though at another time she would have been inclined to give way to her humour, and rant upon the powers of witchcraft, and the malignity of spirits, yet now strained every nerve to compose the feelings and fortify the nerves of her young mistress. She said every thing consolatory that her mind could suggest, and she found an eager listener in Rachel, who was now willing to cling to any shadow of hope.

"To be sure, ma'am," said she, "it is the oddest affair that ever I remember. But I never thought any good would come of going through such a place as Byewood forest, when there was a plain road without it. I have heard my old mother say, that if you once cross a witch she'll be sure to do you harm, and I do verily believe, as I am a sinful woman, that the queer man, and the huntsman, and the

dogs, and the deer into the bargain, which you saw, Miss Rachel, were no other than unlawful folk that I'd be afraid to name; but that's neither here nor there. I have heard you say, Miss Rachel, when my lady, your aunt, has been so cross-grained, that there was no bearing with her, that if one thing went wrong, we should seek comfort from another. And a very good maxim it was. For just see. Here we are, two forlorn creatures, dropped, as it were, from the clouds, and instead of gay London city, popped into a tumble down house, with nothing to look at but the sea, and nothing to listen to but the wind. So far bad enough. But let us look to the other side of the question. That old hall we passed through, and the great staircase, and the long passage, were all gloomy enough; but Miss Rachel, I've just been down to the kitchen, and a better, and a larger, and a warmer, I never saw; and the cook is just going to send up a dinner or a

supper, whichever you call it, which we seldom saw the like of at Hurstwood. So that, after all, we need not be so very ill off; and my advice is, that we comfort ourselves, and make the best of a bad matter."

"And did you enquire," said Rachel, "to whom this place belongs, and how we came to be here, and whether we were expected?"

"Enquire, indeed," replied the housekeeper, "I enquired long enough, and might have been enquiring now for any good it did me. They were civil—very civil; but they only shook their heads when I speered for an answer."

"They! How many were there?"

"Only two. The cook and an old man who looks after the garden down in the valley, and shoots a little sometimes—but he calls himself butler, though he wears an old shooting jacket, with quarter boots and blue hose."

"Then, would they tell you nothing at

all to throw some light upon this strange business? Could you gather no hint from their conversation?" enquired Rachel, anxiously.

"None at all. They had only been told of your coming yesterday, and strict orders had been given that you should receive every attention; but that you were not to stir beyond the grounds, or have any communication with any body but those in the house."

"Did they tell you the name of the place, or what part of England it is in?"

"Not a syllable, Miss Rachel. Except what I have told you, you know as much as myself. The old man has a very red face, and was getting very merry and free in his speech when I came away; and if I had not thought you would want me, I perhaps might have got something out of him by and by."

"Then go down by all means immediately, and if you can succeed in obtaining any information further, bring

it me without delay. I agree with you, Ruth, in thinking that we ought to make the best of our situation; but it is so involved in mystery, that I cannot help fearing the worst. The thought has struck me, that our intended escape was known to Mr. Julius Pennington, and that by his connivance we have been brought to this place."

"Likely enough," replied the housekeeper; "and I should much wonder if that young jackanapes who led us such a march through Byewood was the very man to tell it, and fill his own pocket for his pains. But I'll go down and see how supper goes on, and be civil to Mr. Butler, as far as I know how, and who knows what may be the end of it all."

As soon as Ruth was gone, Rachel rose from the couch on which she had been placed, and finding a comfortable fire at the further end of the apartment,

she seated herself beside it, and awaited with much anxiety the issue of the conference below.

The room in which she sat was not much calculated for enlivening her ideas. It was spacious, but low. It had a wainscotting of dark oak, and many of the pannels, loosened by time, shook to the blast that was heard to rage without. The furniture was antique and massive, but clean and comfortable; and Rachel, as she sat by the blazing hearth, endeavouring to check the tears that flowed unbidden down her cheeks, could not help allowing, that, under different circumstances, she might even here have felt happy and contented.

Ruth was not long absent. She came, accompanied by a decent, matronly looking woman, whom she assisted in arranging the plentiful meal before announced. Her intentions, however, with regard to the butler, had been frustrated by his absence, and Rachel was obliged

to retire to her couch, unsatisfied in her wishes, and ignorant of the fate which was now impending over her. Most fervently did she hope that the morrow would relieve her from her anxiety, and whatever might prove the issue of this extraordinary affair, that her aunt and Julius Pennington were not the prime actors — for if they were, there was indeed no hope.

CHAP. VIII.

THOUGH now placed in a situation not dissimilar to other heroines of romance, yet Rachel, in her solitary abode, found herself possessed of every comfort which she could possibly need, and in so far differed from certain of them. With the exception of once, when she accidentally met the butler on the naked beach, she had no communication with any one but Ruth and the cook—the latter occasionally assisting in the arrangement of her apartment. Notwithstanding all her endeavours, nothing of an explanatory nature could be elicited from the domestics; and conjecture had ample room for the indulgence of its wildest vagaries.

By whom, and for what purpose, she had been brought to this sequestered

mansion — what would be the duration, and what the event of her imprisonment, —these were questions which perpetually agitated her mind, and several days passed away in the constant expectation of some light being thrown upon her prospects. Rachel had been too much inured to the practice of forbearance — too well accustomed to mortifications and self-denials, not to have rather congratulated herself upon the internal comforts of her situation, had she but known the external agent who directed them, and been assured that her present place of abode was rather a respectable and proper refuge from persecution, than a concealment into which she was thrown by the vilest artifices, and for the most injurious and tyrannical purposes. As it was, she began to find no comfort but in patience, and in a thorough reliance upon *His* protection who alone was the real arbiter of her future destinies.

Not unfrequently did the image of her friend De Ruse cross her imagination during her melancholy musings, and it was always accompanied with a start of awakened feeling, and a sigh at the adverse fortunes which seemed to attend them. To her mind, which had known more to dislike and condemn in mankind, than to love and esteem, the manly virtues and polished exterior of De Ruse (or, as we shall hereafter denominate him, of Harry Hurstwood), claimed a peculiar interest and regard. Nor was she displeased at the compliment which the attachment of one so superior paid to her own merits, and the desire he had so uniformly evinced of serving her, even at the hazard of his own life, still further recommended him to her heart.

A generous mind is always affectionate. Generous and liberal actions are the natural fruit of ardent affections, and are fostered and matured in a warm heart.

Rachel owned this as she reviewed the commencement and the continuance of her regard for young Hurstwood. There was in his manner a something so frank, yet so alive to every delicate and gentlemanly feeling; in his expressions an unstudied eloquence, and a seriousness united to energy, which claimed her respect on their first interview, and convinced her, on a further acquaintance, that to love such a man was dangerous, but to be the object of his love was beyond measure blissful and desirable.

A week had elapsed since her residence on the coast, and Rachel's mind began to be somewhat more tranquil. Not that her fears were removed, but that she felt, from the respectable manner in which every thing seemed to be conducted around her — from the marked deference, too, paid to herself, and the civility tendered to her companion, that at least no personal injury or persecution was intended towards them. Hitherto,

the gloomy apartments and the narrow passages of the mansion in which she was immured, or the smooth sands of the little bay that washed its rocky base, had been her only promenades; but the weather becoming settled and serene, she began to cast a longing gaze towards the narrow defile, which, she knew, opened an egress through the circular rampart of rocks by which they were surrounded, to scenes, if not of equal interest, at least of greater softness and cultivation.

One day the butler sent up a message, desiring that "her ladyship," for so they always termed Rachel, would condescend to speak with him for a moment in the hall, as he wished to receive her directions concerning certain packages which had that morning arrived.

Full of curiosity, she hurried down; and, giving immediate orders that they should be opened, found, to her great surprize, a liberal supply of every thing useful or ornamental, and all, though in

the simplest style, yet elegant and costly enough, had she been actually moving in the first circles of fashion.

Much as she had begun to find the extreme inconvenience of her own limited wardrobe, yet, as she contemplated the heaps that were now offered to her acceptance, Rachel could not refrain from a sigh, as the mysterious and distressing nature of her situation occurred to her mind. Ignorant as she was of the donor, she resolved to make as little use as possible of his munificence; and it was not till after many expostulations from Ruth, that she could prevail upon herself to select a few of the simplest and most necessary articles, with the full intention, however, of repayment, when the cloud which at present obscured her prospects was cleared away.

Rendered thus more comfortable, and her anxiety encreasing to extend her rambles, perchance something might transpire to throw light upon the extra-

ordinary events of the last few weeks, she sent for the butler, and requested his directions, in case she wished to extend her walks beyond their present bounds. The old man appeared much pained. After a long pause, he bowed profoundly.

"If," said he, solemnly, "you were to order me to cast myself from this window into those billows below us, I would not hesitate — for my life is at the command of your ladyship; but, in asking me to transgress my master's commands, you ask more than my life — you ask me to sacrifice my duty. Madam, I have been a true servant these fifty years, and you must pardon me if I dare not now be otherwise."

Another profound bow ended this pompous harangue, and Rachel saw that even had she been inclined to tamper, it would be of no use whatever in her circumstances. She therefore determined to have patience — to be open in her conduct — to set suspicion at defiance;

and to have no clandestine understanding with a set of menials, of which she might hereafter have cause to repent.

Amongst other things, contained in the packages, she found many of the most interesting publications of the day; a guitar, and a complete set of implements for drawing and working were added; and in these resources she found an admirable employment, and a very desirable refuge against the attacks of sorrow, direful forebodings, and ennui.

"Had I," thought she, "all these comforts and elegancies, which I here possess, at Hurstwood — in that place endeared to me by a thousand recollections of joy and sorrow — O! how happy should I be, rambling amidst those delightful scenes, — my enjoyments unchequered by persecution and tyranny, and uninterrupted by the many mortifications to which I have been hitherto exposed. Almost would the spirit of my dear father re-embody itself again, and

fly to my protection and assistance, could he witness the neglect of his brother, and the criminal oppression of his sister towards his poor orphaned child; and how would my sainted mother mourn to see the only pledge of her love imprisoned on a barren rock — forced to fly from her home — in the hands of strangers, uncared for, unpitied, and unavenged!"

CHAP. IX.

As our readers may readily suppose, all did not go on very serenely at Hurstwood when the flight of Rachel and the housekeeper was discovered. John Drew was dispatched, post haste, to St. Marions, and, as fortune willed it, he met Julius Pennington at the very moment that the latter was leaving the main road, and about to ride to the coast, in order to settle matters finally with Reuben and his coadjutors.

Julius, heedless of the respectful salutation of the old man, who hailed him with head uncovered and a tremulous "Good morning," was putting his horse to full speed, when the exclamation of "Stop, sir! — stop, or you will break her ladyship's heart!" arrested his attention, and caused him to turn back.

"Well, John," said he, affecting a friendly air, and little dreaming of the news with which the old man was fraught, "what news from Hurstwood this morning? — What do you want with me?"

"Lord bless you, Mr. Julius! — news indeed; — and when I tell you all, I think you will gallop another road, or I mistake very much. My mistress — her ladyship, wants to see you this instant. She's running about like a mad-woman; and as to her talk it's so queer, and so quick, and so desperate, that, to tell the truth, I was main glad to get out of her way. But you know, sir, as well as myself, that Lady Anna has an awkward way with her sometimes, and we are all like to bear with it, as that sweet angel, Miss Rachel, used to do; but it's all over now! *His* will be done, who wills all things!" concluded the old servant, while his voice was choked with sobs, and the tears began to chace one another down his furrowed cheeks.

"For heaven's sake! what is the matter?" cried Julius, in a voice of great apparent alarm. "Surely nothing fatal has befallen Miss Rachel? Tell me this moment, that I may know how to act."

"Fatal!" reiterated the old man, mournfully. "Yes; it is fatal enough for me. Now she is gone, and Ruth, too, poor woman, there will be no house room for me at the Hall. I must e'en flit, like the rest of 'em."

"What are you talking of?" interrupted Julius, impatiently. "Did I ask you about your own affairs, old dotard? Tel me instantly, and without any more foolery, what has happened at Hurstwood?"

"I may be an old dotard," replied John Drew, somewhat resentfully; "but I have less evil in my mind, perhaps, than some of my betters.—Well, sir, for your satisfaction I am bound to tell you, that Miss Rachel and the housekeeper are no where to be found this morning, and nobody about the place

can tell, when or how, or why, or whither they went, and her ladyship is up in the sky about it, and sent me off with orders either to find you or to break my neck in the search. Now, having luckily performed the first part of my errand, I may be fairly spared the rest, I think, and so I will make the best of my way back again."

Julius only waited to hear the fact of Rachel's escape, and galloped off at full speed towards Hurstwood, leaving John Drew to soliloquize as long as he pleased.

The conference at the Hall was not of that calm and composed nature which prudence should have dictated to confederates in guilt. Julius found Lady Anna in the precise state described by the old servant. Terror, rage, vexation, and disappointment, raised such a storm in her breast, as rendered her perfectly untractable. She wept, she entreated, she threatened, she reproached, till at length a violent fit of hystericks relieved Julius

of her company, and gave him time to consider what was best to be done.

The very fact of Rachel's escape proved to him her knowledge of his iniquitous purposes; but how she could obtain information of a circumstance known only to Reuben and himself, and how she could procure the means of leaving the country in so clandestine a manner, was, as yet, a perfect mystery to him. Vainly did he rack his brain for some elucidation of all this;—he was obliged finally to allow that he had been outwitted—that his deeply laid plans had been foiled by the very victim whom he so relentlessly pursued.

What was now to be done? He wished that he had confined his schemes to his own breast. Lady Anna's folly, he feared, would betray him before his purposes were accomplished. He knew that she dreaded the consequences of her niece's elopement, fearing it might come to the ears of Lord Norland, and he was a man

who would not be trifled with. If Lord Norland came down, all his plans would prove abortive, should an interview take place between the brother and sister. His only chance, therefore, of securing Rachel was by setting on foot an immediate pursuit, and by preventing an interview between Lady Anna and her brother, to keep Rachel still aloof from the protection of her friends, and to allow him time to discover her retreat. Her ladyship, therefore, must be disposed of.

Julius did not wait for the recovery of his hostess; but leaving Hurstwood abruptly, told John Drew, who had just arrived, to inform his mistress that he intended to return in a few hours. Agitated, bewildered, and almost desperate, he hurried to that accursed bridge of Barle, and crossing it with stern and determined feelings of revenge, he made his way up the valley, and stopped not in his course till he had reached the sea shore.

He called at the cottage, and was informed by Martha that Reuben was about a mile up the coast looking after his boat, which he supposed had drifted during the night. Leaving his horse in an old shed hard by, he pursued a winding path that led beneath the cliffs. His thoughts were dark and gloomy, his feelings in a high state of irritation, and his purposes desperate and determined.

At length he had walked a full mile, and in the immediate expectation of seeing Reuben, he paused for a moment beneath an overhanging rock, and casting his eyes on the wild and tossing waves that now almost washed his feet, was soon absorbed in deep reflection.

Upon the present cast depended all his future fortunes. If young Hurstwood escaped, beggary was his only inheritance. If Rachel was permitted to claim the protection of her uncle, his hopes were for ever blighted, his love would be rejected with scorn and con-

tempt, and all chance of retrieving his importance, for ever gone! Was this to be borne? No. Julius was without principle, why should he shrink from the path which ambition pointed out? Wealth and dignities could cloak the blackest crimes; but honour and honesty could not conceal poverty. Where nothing is risked, little will be ever gained.

Thus, musing and abstracted, working his feelings up to a certain pitch, deceiving himself with sophistries, hardening his heart, maturing his evil purposes, stood Julius Pennington on the awful brink of the wild ocean, unconscious that the eye of man observed him in this solemn interview with his own thoughts.

He turned—he started. A few paces from him stood Reuben. His arms were folded on his breast; one foot was in advance, his eyes lowered with the doubtful expression of malevolence and evil intention. They eyed each other in silence for a few moments. At length

Julius, with difficulty, recovering his self-possession, and unable to account for the tremor which seized his whole frame, addressed the man who thus firmly and impudently withstood the conscious dignity of his presence.

"Reuben, I am come hither in search of you. I have matters of import to reveal, and plans to be executed. But why do you remain in that posture, and scowl as if I was your enemy instead of your friend and patron? What are you thinking of—what do you mean by this?"

"I was just thinking, master Julius," replied Reuben, still retaining his position, "that now the plank is down at your end, I might as well rise at the other. I have long enough served you and your father, and done all your dirty work. I should like a new master, and so that's plain."

"And if we sink, with whom do you purpose to rise?" enquired Julius, asto-

nished and confounded. "Who do you think would take you on, when the desertion of your old friends is added to your other villanies?"

"I know well enough," replied Reuben, "both where and how I can make myself useful; and let me tell you it is easier and pleasanter to swim with the tide than to buffet against it, and that's your case, or I am much mistaken."

"I am curious to know by what action you could recommend one like yourself to the employment and patronage of any rising family. You are ambiguous, Reuben. Be plain and honest for once."

"Well — well. Once more I will obey you, and you shall have a fair notion of what I was thinking of just now. I came upon you suddenly. I was in a bad humour. I saw you standing on the edge of the rock. You were too busy with your own thoughts to see me. Now, thought I as I looked, here is a ruined

man, and what is worst of all, I must go with him, if I do not play my cards well. Hurstwood then for ever, and Pennington to the devil! Beneath where you stood, I knew the water to be some fathoms deep. Once in the wave, I knew there was no landing place. Could I do young Hurstwood a better service than rid him by a sudden plunge of the man who had embezzled his estate, and sought his life like a blood-hound! I could not, I knew it well."

"You intended, therefore, to rid Hurstwood of a rival, and get yourself a new master by the praise-worthy method of treachery and murder?

"Exactly. When you turned, I was just stepping forward, and, in another moment ——"

"I should have been meat for the fishes, I suppose. What a blood-thirsty villain you are. To stand there, coolly look me in the face, and impudently declare your intention of murdering me with-

out one reason assigned but your private gain, is a fact so monstrous, that were not my own eyes and ears the witness of your baseness, nothing would force me to credit it. Reuben, you are mad!"

"Not a jot more mad or guilty than yourself, Mr. Julius. Let us compare things in my plain way, and we shall soon see that. Have I ever fooled with a young woman when I could not win her heart, payed people to tear her from her friends, that I might ravish her like a heathen slave? Have I ever cheated a man of his estates? Have I ever thirsted for a fellow-creature's blood for hours and days together, because he stood between me and my ill-gotten wealth? Have I—but you look angry. Well you may. If I am a blood-thirsty villain, what is Mr. Julius Pennington? If I had murdered you, whose was the fault? Who set the example? But if you murder young Hurstwood, you murder one who is innocent, and who, so far from de-

serving ill at your hands, has a fair and just claim to all you have and all you can do for him. No—no. Hurstwood must be my game, and he's worth following. I have worked hard enough and long enough for you Penningtons, and the devil a bit have I got by it."

Julius, who had moved hastily from the water's edge, was thunder-struck at what he conceived to be the ingratitude of this low-lived wretch. The plain and forcible eloquence of the man, however, disinclined him to pursue the subject further; he felt himself equally guilty, and was unwilling to trust discussion too far. Men who design evil are often punished by their very instruments, and Julius had to summon up all his self-controul to act consistently with the final accomplishment of his plans. He felt it was no time to quarrel with Reuben, and the very necessity of forbearance towards him was the bitterest draught he had yet been obliged to swallow.

It was not till they had reached the hut, and even prolonged their walk a considerable distance beyond, that Reuben was induced to place himself again under the orders of Julius, and to relinquish all idea of a change of masters. The wily cottager knew well the situation of his patron, and he determined to make the most of it. Julius, however, succeeded in arguing him to a belief, that all might yet be well if they were prompt in their measures; and backing these assertions by a more considerable sum than any he had as yet proffered, Reuben set himself in earnest about the matter. Resentment however, though unknown to Julius, had something to do with this return of Reuben to his duty. Godfrey and he had never exchanged words; but on the return of the latter from one of his excursions, a blow had been given, and he had since disappeared.

Since this fracas there had been no peace at the hut. The young cattle dis-

appeared — the flocks were scattered — the wood-rick was burnt — the market poney stolen, — and to crown all, the boat loosened from its moorings, and entirely lost. All this mischief was very naturally attributed to Godfrey; and as he had ever kept aloof from any concern in the proceedings against Harry Hurstwood, nay, had in a few instances appeared rather to thwart them, Reuben agreed in the suggestion of Julius that it was not improbable he had gone over to him, and was at the present moment aiding his retreat.

This idea was almost confirmed by the account of Rachel's extraordinary flight; and many other circumstances were brought forward and compared with facts which had recently occurred, which savoured strongly of the same conclusion. Julius himself clearly perceived, from Reuben's relation, that there must have been some collusion amongst the persecuted parties, and his indignation

and desire of vengeance was rekindled when he considered, that in all probability his rival was the instrument of Rachel's elopement, if not actually her companion in it.

Thus more united in their plans, another interview was fixed for the night but one ensuing; and in the meantime no exertion was to be spared to procure such information as might determine their future proceedings. One thing was resolved upon, which was the immediate removal of Lady Anna from Hurstwood. This was soon arranged, and Julius returned thither forthwith, to put his plan in execution.

CHAP. X.

While these events were transacting in the neighbourhood of St. Marions, affairs of little less importance were proceeding in another quarter, though the individuals concerned are but slightly known to our readers. The metropolis at this period, as well as the country, wore an uncertain and disturbed aspect. Though, in consequence of the easy suppression of that burst of national feeling which threatened to shake the throne, men put on a fair outside of exultation and joy, yet still were families divided, counties at open enmity with each other, and corporate bodies at variance, urged by faction, or perverted views.

Never, perhaps, were mens minds known to be in a greater ferment than during the first few years of the reign of

George the First. The tories, a strong and powerful party, who had, during the reign of Queen Anne, lorded it over their rivals, and monopolized to themselves all the offices of trust and all the patronage of the government, now found themselves in their turn expelled and oppressed, and exposed to the bitter and inveterate malice of their enemies.

The cry of the whigs was liberty. Their practice was tyranny;—and to use the words of an able writer, "while they pretended to secure the crown for their king, they were with all possible arts confirming their own interests, extending their connections, and giving laws to their sovereign."

All this was so palpable to the nation, that the House of Hanover and its supporters fell into great disrepute with many, both amongst the higher and lower orders of society, and never was the remark that "the king of a faction

is but king of half his subjects," more completely verified than in this reign.

During this clash of opinion, this fever of mens minds, the severity of the government towards delinquents was only exceeded by its criminal indulgence to the oppressive and extortionary measures of its own adherents. Nothing was to be gained but through the medium of the ruling party. The best support of innocence was whiggish principles — the most decided proof of guilt, acknowledged toryism, and fortunate was it for those who could shelter their own share or promotion of the late disturbances beneath the wing of one of the once persecuted heroes of independence.

At this critical period, General De Ruse, the Danish envoy, arrived in London. He was received by the court with every demonstration of respect. He was a man whose youth had given but a faint earnest of his future character, if we may except that sturdy perseverance, which

directed to imprudent ends, involved his ruin—but turned to more laudable objects, raised him to the plenitude of power and distinction.

Disappointment in his early career, and a disgust he had then acquired, both for the knaveries and frivolities of his species, had influenced his future life. He still retained the boldness and activity of his nature, but its impetuosity was softened down by juster views of mankind, and the stern necessity imposed upon him of playing a successful part amongst them. Though his estate was gone, his ancestors disgraced, their halls desolate, and his name shorn of its honours; yet, as he took the infant Harry on his knee, he resolved to devote the remainder of his days to the re-erecting of that honourable superstructure, whose foundation was laid in ages gone by.

He succeeded. Concealing his name and rank, and sanctioning the report which was spread of his having been one

of the unfortunate passengers in the Spanish packet that was lost, he made his way with his infant son to the metropolis of Denmark. It was by the advice of a friend that he took this step, and that friend was no other than Lord Norland. Educated at the same public school, their families distantly connected by the intermarriage of collateral branches, they had almost naturally fallen into an acquaintance, which, had opportunity allowed, might finally have ripened into the strictest friendship.

It is not unfrequently the case, that dissimilar tempers agree best together. At least, so it happened in the present instance. The ardent, ambitious, and headstrong temperament of Mr. Hurstwood found no rival, no obstacle, in the cool, the calculating, the retiring disposition of Lord Norland — while the latter, close and reserved himself, was far from disliking the openness and generosity of his friend, which enabled him to read

with exactness, every passing feeling of his heart.

They had accidentally met at the very moment that the ruined man was deliberating what course to pursue. By the abruptness of his manner, the strong agitation of his countenance, and the occasional incoherence of his expressions, his lordship was at no loss to conjecture, that the catastrophe which he himself had so long foreseen, was at last fallen with unexpected severity upon his friend. He followed him to his hotel; after some difficulty got possession of the facts relating to his situation, and when, after much consultation, he vainly urged Mr. Hurstwood to remain in the country, and settle his affairs personally, he at length proposed to procure him government credentials, and such introductions as would ensure him a favourable reception in the Danish court.

Mr. Hurstwood left England immediately, taking with him his young

Harry, sole heir to his hopes and his misfortunes. He soon procured a military appointment, and from the moment of his embarking in the praise-worthy object of retrieving his fortunes, he became an altered man. He threw his whole energies into his profession, and after a long service, he so far recommended himself to the government, both as a soldier and a diplomatist, that all national disabilities were thrown aside, and he was promoted to those places of distinction and trust, in which he was enabled, by the exercise of a dearly-bought experience, to recover all, and more than all, that had been lost.

Yet, as if our existence in this world is to be so far chequered as not to withdraw our hopes from another and a better, disappointment still seemed to fix its abode in the breast of the Count De Ruse. His son, that cherished object of all his cares, his exertions and his solicitudes, though better instructed,

and more gradually introduced to the world, yet began, as manhood approached, to show symptoms of the same wild impetuosity which had once distinguished his parent. Not that there was any apparent vice in his extravagancies, but he had the same free, bold, and undaunted spirit, the same restlessness, the same ambitious rivalry, and the same warm but uncontrollable nature.

Much was, however, to be allowed for the indiscretions of the young soldier. On finding it necessary to throw off old habits, we are not unfrequently led into the opposite extremes. It thus, in some measure, happened with the Count De Ruse. Fearful of his son running into the same errors with himself, he occasionally exercised a measure of severity very contrary to his general conduct, and thus committed the very common error of occasionally bartering the natural affection and confidence of his son, for an awe, a veneration, and a respect

which were less likely to controul or subdue the youthful sallies of a lively and generous, yet careless disposition.

It happened that General Gordon, during a cessation of the Moscovite campaign, in which he so much distinguished himself, came on public business for a few months to Copenhagen. The temper of our young hero needed no such stimulus to raise his military enthusiasm. The temptation which was thus thrown in his way was not to be withstood. General Gordon was received as an honoured inmate into his father's house, and as he listened to the glowing recitals of the veteran commander, young Harry was fired with a desire to share such dangers, participate in such honours, and procure for himself a name.

He asked the General's leave to accompany him on his return. It was readily granted on condition of the count's consent to the scheme. This,

however, was not very readily obtained, for the anxious father clearly saw all the dangers which might result from his son's impetuosity. In vain for some time did the young man petition, intreat, and argue. At length, as if wearied out with importunity, the Count de Ruse flatly assured his son, that though he would not prevent his going, by withholding any longer either his consent or the requisite supplies, yet he should depart without his blessing; and before they met again, he felt assured that he would deeply regret the step he was now about to take.

Harry was a good and affectionate son; but to his heated imagination, the objections of his father, in the present instance, appeared unreasonable and unjust. He was fatigued with the useless formalities and gay routine of the court —he heard of his father's exploits, and he wished to imitate them, and as there was no present chance of a Danish war,

his fancy dressed the future career of the general with every thing that was heroic in chivalry, and delightful in romance.

The contest between filial regard, and the ardent desires of his own heart, was long and severe; and probably had his father condescended to make one appeal to his affections, the scheme would have been at once relinquished. But he maintained a severe silence—looked at his son as if he was already criminal, and while he gave him a choice of action, seemed too proud to direct it.

To this conduct on the part of his father, were added the pressing invitations of the general himself, who, having conceived a great liking to his young protegé, was unwilling to part with him, as the term of his residence in the country expired. They went. The campaign was opened. The din of arms was heard, the pomp and circumstance of war opened to the admiring eyes of

the young adventurer. But that which at distance attracts our regard and admiration by its glitter, soon shows itself in all its nakedness and deformity, when approached nearer or in actual possession. Harry had a bold, undaunted spirit, and he acted his part well wherever he was called into action. But he found the military career full of scenes of horror — the wreath of fame was to be won by a thousand hardships and privations — his ardent spirit could not wanton uncontrolled — he was obliged to submit to the heavy restraints of discipline — and before the campaign was half over, he acknowledged to himself, that the profession he had chosen was one which required more patience, coolness, submission, and presence of mind, than any other he could have pitched upon for the employment of his youthful energies.

It was a school, however, well calculated for the genius, and admirably

adapted to repress the hereditary feelings of a Hurstwood; and ere a year of active warfare had elapsed, the Count de Ruse, could he have seen his son, would have had no reason to regret the change which had taken place both in his ideas and his manner.

At length General Gordon received a call to join the standard of the Stuarts in the Highlands of Scotland. He proposed to his young friend to acompany him; appointed him his aid-de-camp, and endeavoured to excite his enthusiasm in the cause, by representing it as his own, and painting in glowing colours the honours and triumphs that awaited them. Harry hesitated. He revered his general, but he now felt more than ever that he loved his father, and he accordingly declared, that without his complete concurrence, nay his absolute desire, that he would be absent from his home no longer.

A courier was accordingly dispatched

to the Count de Ruse, but by some unforseen accident, no answer arrived to the letters forwarded; which, for the time, so wounded the feelings of the young man, that he was prevailed upon to embark, by the earnest solicitations of the party engaged. What followed, we have generally recounted to our readers in the foregoing pages.

It unfortunately happened that the Count de Ruse was suffering under a severe attack of illness when his son's courier arrived—and as strict orders had been given by his physicians that no one on business should be admitted into his presence, it was too late to interfere, when the nature of his son's request came to his knowledge. His anxiety, however, was extreme, and he suffered the most dreadful alarm when he heard what cause he had been prevailed upon to espouse, well knowing from the state of public feeling in his own country, that the bigotry of the

exiled family would ultimately ruin their cause, however successful they might be on the outset.

The period seemed now to have arrived, when the Count de Ruse might best visit his native land; for at the same time that he could keep a vigilant eye over the welfare of his son, he could likewise put in execution the plan he had formed upon his sudden desertion of the halls of his forefathers. He had received occasional communications as to the state of his affairs from Lord Norland, and felt better satisfied during his absence, when he learnt, that the hall was actually inhabited by the sister of that nobleman, and that the Penningtons had not taken any steps which rendered his interference necessary, or broke into his present plan of concealment.

It happened fortunately for his object, that at this very period an envoy was to be sent out to arrange some matters of importance with the British court, and

all voices concurred in nominating the Count de Ruse to this important and honourable office.

On his arrival in England the die had been cast: the cause of the Stuarts lay prostrate; the prisons were thronged with the unfortunate adherents of that ill-fated party; and the scaffold had already begun to flow with rebel blood.

Too much cause had the now wretched father to fear that his son had either perished in the battle field, or was at this moment exposed to the miserable penalty of a traitor. In vain were all his enquiries. Hearing that General Gordon was yet lurking in the Highlands, he employed the kind offices of a Scotch gentleman, and learnt from him that the unfortunate leader knew nothing of his aid-de-camp, but that he had suddenly disappeared, after proving himself a hero in the field, and a veteran in the cabinet.

The count was now perfectly desponding. All his hopes of replacing the name

of Hurstwood in its former respectability and importance seemed fled past redemption, and he awaited each day for the dreadful intelligence of his son's fate.

One fine evening, as he sat in his apartment, looking upon the busy Thames, which flowed beneath his windows, and thinking over the many events of his chequered career, his servant opened the door and announced the presence of a stranger who had business of importance.

The count rose from his seat, and was receiving, with distant and high-bred courtesy, an elderly gentleman, whose dress and air proclaimed him of no ordinary rank, when the latter, to his surprize, seized his hand with an eager grasp, and, fixing his eyes earnestly in his face, seemed for some moments too much agitated to speak.

"Hurstwood," said he, at length, recovering his emotion, "I do not wonder, that, in the person before you, you have have no recollection of the companion of

your younger days. Had not stubborn facts proved it, Lord Norland had not known the gay and buoyant Hurstwood in the sedate and melancholy Count De Ruse."

The count started. The recollection of his follies and their penalty rushed upon his imagination more strongly than usual at the sight of the only being who knew his real history, and it was some time ere he could compose himself sufficiently to give the proper welcome to his friend.

"I am not accustomed," said his lordship, as soon as tranquillity was restored, "to be affected by those events which the world calls wonderful; yet I can well divine the cause of that emotion which took possession of me on my first interview with the Count De Ruse. To see one of such true nobility of soul as to bear up against all the withering blasts of fortune—of such virtuous perseverance as finally to rise superior to their

violence, — of such laudable forbearance as never to swerve from the once chosen path, conveys to my feelings so much of the truly exalted, the dignified, and the good, that I had been wanting to your merits had I experienced less on our first meeting, after so long an interval."

"My lord," replied the count, "the commendation of such a man as your lordship does me honour. Added to the satisfaction of my private feelings, it is the only gratification which my prosperity affords me, if I except the means I possess of benefitting my fellow-creatures, and repaying their evil with good."

"The sentiment is noble and worthy of you," replied his lordship; "yet it appears strange to me, that, after so many years of toil, of danger, and of exile, you should reap so little enjoyment from all you have undergone. Yet true it is that the end, however brilliant in the distance, however difficult the means by which it

is to be attained, seldom, in possession, equals the anticipated value."

"Your reasoning is just in general cases," replied the count, in a melancholy tone; "but it falls short in mine. I am truly grateful to Providence for the success with which he has blest my endeavours, and the goods of fortune which I have in possession are altogether equal to the expectations which I had formed. But, alas! now that my exertions have been crowned with success—at the very moment that it is in my power to redeem the consequence of my ancestors, and to retrieve myself in the eyes of my country, the only object for which I laboured—the only stimulus to my toils—the only link which tied me to a world I am inclined to despise,—this is dashed from me,—it is broken—it is vanished, and all my hopes and all my joys together with it!"

The count stopped deeply agitated. Lord Norland as if in expectation of

something further, maintained silence. The count at length resumed.

"It is perhaps foolish in me, my lord, to trouble you with a recital of any of my domestic sorrows. Yet as you are the only person who knows my real name and history, and as you have always acted towards me the friendly part, I am willing to suppose that a brief explanation of what I have just alluded to will not be totally without interest. I am at present suffering — deeply suffering — under the supposed loss of my son. A considerable interval has now elapsed since we parted; and, alas! through my own obstinacy, I suffered it to be in anger. His motives were honourable, and his actions have borne ample testimony to his merits. But I was selfish. I looked only to the gratification of my own feelings, and I fear I wronged his noble nature. You will grieve to hear that he acted a conspicuous part in the late re-

bellion, as aid-de-camp to General Gordon, and in consequence of this, I have too much reason to apprehend, that, if he has not already fallen in the field, he must speedily become a victim to the violent and bloody policy of the victorious party. Perhaps at this very moment the best news would be, that he had shared the fate of many of his brave companions, and died standing to his colours, like a true soldier."

"Scarcely that," replied his lordship, musing; "because, if so, I should disappoint you, in being the bearer of the information that your son is still alive. Next to the formalities of an old acquaintance, my business here is on the very subject you have introduced. I happened yesterday to make a call of condolence upon my elegant and very worthy friend, Mrs. Kirkbye of Kilbank, who has recently sustained the loss of her husband. This lady has, in many in-

stances, been a friend to me and mine; and through her alone do I obtain information of the proceedings at Hurstwood, which are naturally not uninteresting to me, on many accounts. I have a niece, a good girl I believe, who resides there with my maiden sister — a woman, I am sorry to say it, with whom I could never own any community of feeling, — whose temper is unbearable — whose extravagance would be criminal did I allow it — and whose disposition is a compound of every thing that is offensive and ridiculous. You will naturally enquire how I could think of entrusting her with the charge of my brother's child? Because I am fully convinced that we are generally disinclined to imitate those failings in others which are a daily annoyance to ourselves. Besides, the school of early adversity is frequently the means of ulterior happiness. Brought up to the gratification of every wish — ignorant of the lessons of forbearance, self-denial,

fortitude, and self-dependence, man is unfit to fill his worldly station with honour to himself or advantage to his fellow-creatures. I therefore determined to leave Rachel Kemyss to the endurance of her hard lot, providing only that I was satisfied that no mental or bodily injury was likely to befal her.

"But," continued his lordship, "to come to what more materially concerns you. My niece had been staying at Kilbank for some weeks previous to Mrs. Kirkbye's departure for London. After a long strain of panegyric upon this neglected scion of our house, the lady turned the subject to her own son, acknowledged more warmly than they deserved, some trifling services I had rendered him when under a cloud, in consequence of the part he had taken in the late disturbances, and, at length, to my great surprize, recommended to my patronage and protection a young man of the name of De Ruse, who being a

foreigner and friendless, had sought and procured refuge at Kilbank, having a claim, from previous intimacy, to the notice of Robert Kirkbye."

"Great and adorable Being!" exclaimed the count, interrupting his friend's narration, "how inscrutable are thy ways! Then Harry is actually at this moment resident within a few miles of his paternal halls and the place of his nativity?"

"Stay, my good friend," replied his lordship; "I hope, sincerely, for your own sake, that your supposition is not true in fact. Mrs. Kirkbye, noticing the interest which I took in her subject, though of course ignorant of the reason, gave me an unreserved account of all she knew, and concluded her story by stating, that, for some unaccountable reason, the young man was obliged suddenly to abscond from Kilbank; — that a few hours after his departure, the house

was entered by the officers of justice, under a warrant from Mr. Pennington; and that every effort was now making for the capture of the unfortunate fugitive."

"Alas!" said the count, mournfully, "this is the unforeseen consequence of my having ordered my legal advisers to bring the Penningtons to account for their nefarious conduct. My poor son once in their power, they will be able either to dictate their own terms, or if they pursue their advantage to his destruction, they calculate too well upon the broken heart of his unfortunate parent."

"That such is their design I cannot doubt," replied Lord Norland; "and I came here to devise means by which they may be ultimately disappointed. Old Pennington is a knave and a fool: his son is the most to be dreaded. He is a young fellow of great energy and

violent passions; and I am the more anxious that we should work hand in hand, because I have a little business of a private nature to settle with him myself."

We will not trespass upon the time of our readers, by giving at length the remainder of the conversation which passed between the Earl and the Count De Ruse; for by this name alone would the latter suffer himself to be styled. Suffice it to say, that measures were immediately proposed and adopted, for the expediency and event of which we refer our readers to the ensuing chapters. A romance, however particular and minute in its detail, must still in some degree resemble a sketch, and leave much to be filled up by the imagination. The skilful artist will give the general features of his subject with boldness and precision;—the romance writer or novelist advances a little further: he touches off some sepa-

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